

**A New and Living Way: Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection  
in the Epistle to the Hebrews**

by

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Duke University

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in the Department of  
Religion in the Graduate School  
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ABSTRACT

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## **Abstract**

The New Testament book known as the epistle to the Hebrews contains little obvious reference to Jesus' resurrection. Modern interpreters generally account for this relative silence by noting that the author's soteriological and christological concerns have led him to emphasize Jesus' death and exaltation while ignoring, spiritualizing, or even denying his resurrection. In particular, the writer's metaphorical appeal to the Yom Kippur sacrifice, with its dual emphasis on the slaughter of the victim and the presentation of the victim's blood by the high priest, allows him to explain the salvific significance of Jesus' death and exaltation. The crucifixion can be likened to the slaughter of the victim, while Jesus' exaltation in heaven can be likened to the high priest entering the holy of holies. In this way the cross can be understood as an atoning sacrifice. Such a model leaves little room for positive or distinct reflection on the soteriological or christological significance of the resurrection.

This study argues that the soteriology and high-priestly Christology the author develops depend upon Jesus' bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven. The work begins with a survey of positions on Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews. I then present a case for the presence and role of Jesus' bodily resurrection in the text. First, I demonstrate that the writer's argument in Heb 1–2 for the elevation of Jesus above the angelic spirits assumes that Jesus has his humanity—his blood and flesh—with him in heaven. Second, I show that in Heb 5–7 the writer identifies Jesus' resurrection to an indestructible life as the point when Jesus became a high priest. Third, I explain how this thesis makes

coherent the author's consistent claims in Heb 8–10 that Jesus presented his offering to God in heaven. I conclude that Jesus' crucifixion is neither the place nor the moment of atonement for the author of Hebrews. Rather, in keeping with the equation in the Levitical sacrificial system of the presentation of blood to God with the presentation of life, Jesus obtained atonement where and when the writer says—when he presented himself in his ever-living, resurrected humanity before God in heaven. Jesus' bodily resurrection is, therefore, the hinge around which the high-priestly Christology and soteriology of Hebrews turns.

## **Dedication**

This project is dedicated to my best friend—my wife Heather—without whose encouragement and aid it would not have been completed.

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Whatever the merits or demerits of this study, it is my sincere hope that it will be of benefit to both the academy and the church. *Soli Deo gloria.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### *1.1 Stating the Questions: Jesus' Resurrection and Atoning Offering in Hebrews*

Hebrews is often described as the riddle of the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> In many ways this text feels out of place in the larger canon; in particular, the author seems relatively silent on the subject of Jesus' resurrection. Scholars frequently note the absence of this component of the early Christian confession and proclamation in the text. In view of the rest of the New Testament documents and the long history of interpretation linking Hebrews with Paul, the strange sound of the author's silence regarding Jesus' resurrection demands the question: why?

Several answers can be identified in the secondary literature. Despite the diversity of interpretations, however, two intriguing points of agreement are discernable. Nearly all sides agree that 1) the category of Jesus' exaltation eclipses that of his resurrection to some degree and 2) this emphasis on exaltation logically follows from the author's primary concern to explicate the way that Jesus' death can be understood as an act of self-sacrifice that deals with the related problems of sin and access to God.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., H. -M. Schenke, "Erwägungen zum Rätsel des Hebräerbriefes," in *Neues Testament und christliche Existenz: Festschrift für Herbert Braun zum 70. Geburtstag am 4. Mai 1973* (ed. Hans Dieter Betz and Luise Schottroff; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1973), 421–37; James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (CBQMS 13; Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983), 1; and, famously, Wilhelm Wrede, *Das literarische Rätsel des Hebräerbriefes. Mit einem Anhang über den literarischen Charakter des Barnabasbriefes* (FRLANT 8; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906).

Yet, while it is generally thought that Jesus' resurrection is not an essential event for the author's argument, has it actually been excluded? To put the question more broadly, what is the status of Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews? This is the first issue with which this study will be concerned. I will argue that the category or event of Jesus' resurrection is not only important for the author's argument, but additionally that his argument depends upon the assumption that the resurrection was an event that involved the giving of indestructible life to Jesus' human body.

As will be shown, the strength of the consensus opinion that Jesus' resurrection is not essential for Hebrews' argument hangs largely on the way the author is perceived to develop the idea of Jesus' high-priestly work, both with respect to his crucifixion and his ministry in heaven. Scholars generally assert that the writer explicates Jesus' death and exaltation as the key moments in his accomplishment of the ultimate purification of sin. This stands at the heart of the near-universal judgment that the resurrection does not play a major role in the argument. Any study that seeks to establish the importance of the place of the resurrection in Hebrews must therefore address the way that the author works out his claims regarding the significance and status of Jesus as the great high priest.

The second concern of this dissertation addresses the interrelated notions of Jesus' high priesthood and atoning work in Hebrews. Specifically, if Jesus' bodily resurrection can be shown to be a component of the author's argument, then I will also need to demonstrate how this finding elucidates and coheres with the author's concern to present Jesus as the one who accomplishes atonement. I argue that, in light of Jesus' resurrection, one can see that the writer does not identify Jesus' death as the moment of redemption



and purification. His crucifixion is not the locus of the atoning moment. Rather, the author consistently points to Jesus' offering in heaven as the event that effects atonement. I intend to show that, in light of the presence of Jesus' resurrection in the text, it is Jesus' presentation of his perfected, or glorified, flesh and blood before God—his resurrected humanity in heaven—that results in the purification that allows other human beings to fully enter into God's presence.

Before developing these points, I survey the answers already given to the question of Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews. The commentaries and articles discussed in this first chapter are a somewhat random collection. This is largely due to the fact that the issue of Jesus' bodily resurrection in Hebrews is rarely addressed at any length or in any detail; one has little positive material with which to work. Moreover, it often happens that scholars have used the language of resurrection in reference to Hebrews without much clarity or specificity. I nevertheless lay out three broad groupings of positions regarding Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews. In spite of the points of divergence among and within these groups, almost every side agrees with two main points: 1) Jesus' resurrection is insignificant for Hebrews' Christology; and, 2) this lack of emphasis on the resurrection follows from the fact that the writer focuses on Jesus' death and exaltation as the two central christological and soteriological moments or categories.

### ***1.2 The State of the Questions***

A survey of modern scholarly literature on Hebrews reveals an important generalization with respect to the issue of Jesus' resurrection: the category of Jesus' heavenly exaltation leads the author of Hebrews to downplay that of Jesus' resurrection.

A continuum of opinions along which this broader consensus is qualified and defined can be seen in the secondary literature.

On one end of this spectrum are those who argue that, in spite of his relative silence on the matter, the author affirms Jesus' bodily resurrection. The event does not play a central role in his Christology because his focus on Jesus' priestly status and atoning work have led him to emphasize the categories of Jesus' death and exaltation more than that of his resurrection. On the other end are those who argue that the author has deliberately displaced the category of Jesus' resurrection with that of his exaltation. It is, in their view, precisely the unity this writer sees between Jesus' sacrificial death and heavenly ministry that pushes him to avoid or even suppress belief in Jesus' resurrection. Between these poles stand interpreters who either remain agnostic or who tend to conflate the categories of ascension, resurrection, and exaltation. I turn first to a discussion of those who claim that while the writer does not focus on Jesus' resurrection, he does nonetheless affirm it.

### ***1.2.1 The "Passed Over" View***

On one end of the spectrum just discussed stands the "Passed Over" view. For these interpreters the resurrection of Jesus is not in any way denied in Hebrews. The event is simply not central for the writer because his particular soteriological concerns—and especially the elements of his priestly Christology—have led him to focus on the

moments of Jesus' death and exaltation.<sup>2</sup> In general, proponents of this approach are keen to point out that the author's relative silence regarding the resurrection does not allow the conclusion that the author denied Jesus' resurrection. The mention of Jesus being led out of the dead in Heb 13:20 serves as evidence that the writer affirmed the resurrection. The author's christological model of humiliation followed by exaltation, however, correlates with his attempt to map the Christ event onto the pattern of the two key moments in the atoning sacrifices of Yom Kippur (the slaughter of the victims and the high priest's entry

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<sup>2</sup> Some proponents are F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 32–33; Aelred Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Achievement of Salvation in the Epistle's Perspectives* (St. Meinard, Ind.: Grail, 1960), 172–78; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 603; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47A; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 16; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 96–97; Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 35–37, 142; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), Xxxviii–ix, 235 n. 2, 242; Arthur S. Peake, *Hebrews: Introduction, Authorized Version, Revised Version with Notes and Index* (NCB; New York: Henry Frowde, 1902), 32, 242; Brooke Foss Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (3d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1903), 230. See also the first version of the KEK 13 written by Otto Michel (*Der Brief an die Hebräer* [7th ed.; KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936], 232) where he argued that Heb 13:20 demonstrates that the author has not fully displaced Jesus' resurrection with his exaltation. In his words, “Schien es gelegentlich so, als sei die Kraft unzerstörbaren Lebens (7:16) oder die Erhöhung zur Rechten der Majestät (1:3) für unseren Brief wichtiger als die Auferstehung, so zeigt Hb 13:20, dass die urchristliche Lehre von der Auferstehung nicht verdrängt ist.” In later editions, however, this comment is excised in favor of the less committal statement that the language of 13:20 “dürfte ... auf die Auferstehung Christi zu deuten sein” (*Der Brief an die Hebräer* [14th ed.; KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984], 537). Although they tend to allow for a more important role for Jesus' resurrection than the other interpreters mentioned, N. T. Wright (*The Resurrection of the Son of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003], 457–61) and some Catholic scholars should be mentioned here. See Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux: I.—Introduction* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1952), 95, who states, “La résurrection de Jésus n'est guère soulignée par Hébr. Elle es cependant impliquée (v, 7) et supposée par la permanence éternelle de la parfaite humanité du Christ, subsistant au delà de la mort, et formellement enseignée, XIII, 20.” See also Pierre Grelot, *Corps et Sang du Christ en Gloire: Enquête dogmatique* (LD 182; Paris: Cerf, 1999), 113–28; and Albert Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ: Épître aux Hébreux 1 et 2* (LD 58; Paris: Cerf, 1969), esp. 291, 295, 341, 369, 390. So too, Franz Joseph Schierse, whose work on Hebrews is discussed in more detail in section 2.3.1.3.2 below. Schierse made the insightful observation that, “Die Leiblichkeit des Erhöhten ableugnen zu wollen, hiesse an der fundamentalen Tatsache vorbeisehen, dass der Hb ... eine konkrete, historische Persönlichkeit im Blick hat” (*Verheissung und Heilsvollendung: Zur theologischen Grundfrage des Hebräerbriefes* [Munich: Zink, 1955], 163).

into the holy of holies). This allows the author to explicate the soteriological significance of Jesus' death and exaltation together with an equally appropriate Christology—Jesus as high priest. Such a model can assume the resurrection, but its very two-step nature leaves little room for extended reflection on the possible implications of this event. Of the many who hold this view, I discuss two especially clear examples: F. F. Bruce and William L. Lane.

#### ***1.2.1.1 F. F. Bruce***

In the revised edition of his commentary on Hebrews, F. F. Bruce provides a succinct example of what I have dubbed the “Passed Over” view. He states:

It is because of his concentration on the priestly aspect of Christ's work that our author has so much to say of [Jesus'] death and exaltation, but so little of his resurrection. The two principal moments in the great sin offering of Old Testament times were the shedding of the victim's blood in the court of the sanctuary and the presentation of its blood inside the sanctuary. In the antitype these two moments were seen to correspond to the death of Christ on the cross and his appearance at the right hand of God. In this pattern the resurrection, as generally proclaimed in the apostolic preaching, finds no separate place.<sup>3</sup>

Given, then, that the writer's goal is to correlate Jesus' death with the moment of “the shedding of the victim's blood in the court of the sanctuary” and Jesus' exaltation with that of “the presentation of its blood inside the sanctuary,” the resurrection simply does not come into view because the “pattern” of Yom Kippur (“the great sin offering of Old Testament times”) does not contain a clear point of correspondence with that event.

Bruce clarifies that one cannot conclude that the author denies Jesus' resurrection. While commenting on 13:20 he notes, “This is the only reference to our Lord's

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<sup>3</sup> Bruce, *Hebrews*, 32–33.

resurrection in the epistle; elsewhere the emphasis is on his exaltation to the right hand of God, in keeping with his exegesis of Ps 110:1, 4, and the exposition of Jesus' high priesthood."<sup>4</sup> Bruce also finds a hint of the importance of the resurrection in Heb 2:15 when the writer speaks of Jesus freeing his brothers and sisters from the fear of death. "His resurrection," he writes, "is not expressly mentioned here (nor anywhere else in the epistle, for that matter, outside of the doxology of 13:20f.), but it is implied nonetheless."<sup>5</sup>

There can be no doubt, then, of the author's affirmation of Jesus' resurrection. In 13:20 he actually refers to the event and other points in his argument imply it. Nevertheless, Jesus' resurrection is "passed over" in relative silence in Hebrews because the author's emphasis on Jesus' priestly status and work lead him to focus on the two great moments of Yom Kippur. The depiction of Jesus as the better high priest who sacrificed himself on the cross and then entered heaven to serve as the mediator before God so dominates the writer's theological agenda that there is limited opportunity to consider the resurrection.

#### ***1.2.1.2 William L. Lane***

In his commentary on Hebrews, William L. Lane argues for the same basic point just discussed, though he has a slightly different take on the subject. While explaining the meaning of Heb 1:3 Lane claims,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 388.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 86.

Christians were familiar with the notion of the Son's session at God's right hand from creedal confessions and hymns. They would recognize immediately that the reference was to Christ's exaltation after his resurrection. This may explain why there is so little direct appeal to the fact of Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews (cf. 13:20). In v 3, and elsewhere, an allusion to the position at God's right hand apparently served as an inclusive reference to Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and continuing exaltation.<sup>6</sup>

For Lane the author subsumes Jesus' resurrection under the category of exaltation. In an essay addressing the concept of life after death in Hebrews he states that the author locates Jesus' resurrection "within a dominant pattern of reference to Jesus' death and exaltation."<sup>7</sup> Lane posits that the author adopted this mode of argumentation because his audience had already been well versed in teaching about Jesus' resurrection.

To defend this claim Lane points to the mention of the general resurrection in Heb 6:2. He takes this reference as evidence that the basic Christian instruction the community had received "must have been not only in the common biblical and Jewish belief in the resurrection at the end of the age, but also in the factual basis for the hope in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead."<sup>8</sup> He adds, "This is an important deduction that may explain why there is so little direct appeal to the fact of Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews."<sup>9</sup> Thus for Lane the writer's assumption of this foundational instruction, which must have included Jesus' resurrection, enabled him to shift his focus off of Jesus' resurrection and on to the larger implications of the end result of the resurrection—Jesus'

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<sup>6</sup> Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 16.

<sup>7</sup> William L. Lane, "Living a Life in the Face of Death: The Witness of Hebrews," in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament* (ed. Richard Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 247–69, here 256.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

exaltation. Belief in the resurrection is like milk, while the teaching the writer presents regarding Jesus' exaltation and priesthood is like solid food (cf. 5:12–14).

Having said this, Lane does not think the writer remains completely silent on the question of Jesus' resurrection. He points, for example, to the author's comment in 7:16 that Jesus has the "power of an indestructible life." He asserts that this verse refers "to an objective event, rather than to a quality of life that belonged to Jesus inherently."<sup>10</sup> He also argues that in Heb 13:20 Jesus becomes the great shepherd of the sheep by way of being "led out of the dead." Thus like Bruce, Lane takes 13:20 to be a definite reference to the resurrection. Lane, however, goes further. He argues that 13:20 indicates that Jesus' resurrection is central for the author in God's act of establishing the new covenant. Hebrews 13:20 indicates that "God has established a new covenant with his people through the 'leading out' of Jesus from the realm of the dead."<sup>11</sup> The readers of the letter are therefore "to find in the resurrection of Jesus the factual basis for Christian faith and hope."<sup>12</sup>

### ***1.2.1.3 Assessment***

These last comments from Lane only highlight the strange absence of reference to Jesus' resurrection at other points in the author's argument. Lane himself puzzles over why the author of Hebrews, who is otherwise so intent on establishing Jesus' solidarity with humanity and the importance of Jesus' example of faith in the face of death, does

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 265–66. Unfortunately he does not justify this conclusion.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

not openly appeal to Jesus' resurrection when he seeks to inspire and encourage his addressees to persevere in the midst of suffering.<sup>13</sup> In the face of this question Lane simply defaults to the consensus view that, "In Hebrews ... the emphasis is placed on Jesus' sacrifice and exaltation"<sup>14</sup> instead of his resurrection.

Both Lane and Bruce, then, in spite of their differences on the extent to which Jesus' resurrection informs the writer's argument, agree that the author's relative silence regarding Jesus' resurrection should not be understood as a denial of the resurrection. Hebrews 13:20 proves that such a conclusion would be mistaken. Rather, this silence correlates with the emphasis and claims the author makes about Jesus' death and exaltation. The portrayal of Jesus' death as a sacrifice and the corresponding atonement this accomplishes absorbs the writer's attention.

While the view just outlined has many adherents, it also has many detractors. As has been noted, the comment in Heb 13:20 that God "brought out from the dead ... our Lord Jesus Christ" is important for this "Passed Over" position. Here, finally, proponents can point to positive proof that the author has not completely neglected or denied Jesus' resurrection. His priestly Christology may not major on the event, but he nonetheless affirms it.

Yet, as I discuss in more detail below, other interpreters note that the language of 13:20 itself, while not singular in the New Testament (cf. Rom 10:7), is a strange

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 262–64. He states, "An appeal to vindication through resurrection would have constituted a powerful argument for perseverance and hope" (264).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 264.



formulation for Jesus' resurrection.<sup>15</sup> Some of these scholars argue that even 13:20 makes no clear mention of Jesus' resurrection. More to the point, these interpreters point out that the extent to which advocates of the "Passed Over" view hold that the category of resurrection eclipses that of Jesus' exaltation is also the extent to which this view commits itself to embracing an irresolvable tension at the heart of the author's perceived theological project.

In other words, the more one tries to hold together the event of the cross with the high-priestly Christology and Yom Kippur-based soteriology the author develops, the harder it becomes to assume a notion of Jesus' bodily resurrection in the background of the author's argument. Such an affirmation would create a troubling "gap" between the sacrificial death of Jesus and the author's language of Jesus' high-priestly offering of his blood in heaven. The very link the "Passed Over" commentators presuppose between Jesus' sacrificial death and high-priestly offering in heaven suggests that an affirmation of Jesus' bodily resurrection is necessarily excluded by the author. Hans Windisch articulates this problem well when he states that for the author of Hebrews "die *Auferstehung* ist bei der ganzen Symbolik ignoriert, weil sie die Einheitlichkeit der hohenpriesterlichen Aktion aufheben würde."<sup>16</sup> The closer together one holds Jesus' death and the atoning offering that the writer speaks of as occurring in the heavenly

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<sup>15</sup> So, e.g., Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 406; Ernst Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk: Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief* (4th ed.; FRLANT 55; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 66 n. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (2d ed.; HNT 14; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), 79 (emphasis original).

tabernacle, the harder it becomes to allow for the presence of any notion of Jesus' resurrection that is not simultaneous with Jesus' death itself.

Given the necessary unity of Jesus' heavenly offering and sacrificial death so that the death of Jesus itself can be understood as the atoning moment, the writer's silence regarding Jesus' resurrection appears to become less a matter of emphasis and more a fundamental component of his theological project. If the cross is the atoning event, then, assuming the writer aims for something approaching consistent explication, the kind of gap that the confession of Jesus' bodily resurrection introduces between his death and the heavenly element of his offering threatens to destabilize his entire project. To say that the author merely passes over Jesus' resurrection in silence because of his interest in explicating the soteriological significance of the category of exaltation too quickly glosses over this (christo)logical problem.

It could be that the author is simply inconsistent. Attempts to pin him down may push for levels of precision on certain issues that he deliberately left vague. Or, perhaps he simply failed to think through the implications of his explication of Jesus' death adequately, or in light of other confessional elements he affirmed. Such conclusions are certainly possible. But these difficulties have led others to suggest alternative explanations.

### ***1.2.2 Jesus' Resurrection as a Spiritual Ascension, and Agnostic Approaches***

Between the poles of the spectrum I laid out above stand a number of interpreters who admit some reference to Jesus' resurrection, particularly in Heb 13:20, but who recognize the problem of the gap created by the view outlined above. Various strategies

are invoked to address the issue. Some take an agnostic view. The author's understanding of the relationship between the resurrection and the exaltation is either impossible to discern with certainty, or so fraught with irresolvable tensions that one cannot know what he thought.<sup>17</sup> Some suggest a split between Jesus' spiritual ascension and later exaltation. They argue that Jesus' spirit ascended immediately into heaven at his death, later rejoined his lifeless, human body at the resurrection, and then ascended again with his resurrected body.<sup>18</sup> Still others propose that the author completely conflates Jesus' resurrection with his exaltation.<sup>19</sup> I will begin with a discussion of the position that one simply cannot draw any firm conclusions about place or conception of Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews.

### ***1.2.2.1 Agnostic Approaches***

#### ***1.2.2.1.2 William R. G. Loader***

The apparent reference to the resurrection in Heb 13:20 leads William R. G. Loader in his study on the Christology of Hebrews to address the issue of how the author

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<sup>17</sup> E.g., William R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* (WMANT 53; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1981), 49–54; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 305–6; H. -F. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (15th ed.; KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 753–57.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Otfried Hofius, *Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitl. Ruheort im Hebräerbrief* (WUNT 11; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1970), 181 n. 359; Joachim Jeremias, "Zwischen Karfreitag und Ostern: Descensus und Ascensus in der Karfreitagstheologie des Neuen Testaments," *ZNW* 42 (1949): 194–201, here esp. 197–201.

<sup>19</sup> Some proponents are Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer (Hebr 1–6)* (EKKNT 17/1; Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1990), 65; Idem, *An die Hebräer (10,19 –13,25)* (EKKNT 17/3; Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1997), 402–3; David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBLMS 18; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 87 n.149, 90, 146; Ulrich Kellermann, *Auferstanden in den Himmel: 2 Makkabäer 7 und die Auferstehung der Märtyrer* (SBS 95; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1979), 119–22; Richard D. Nelson, "He Offered Himself": Sacrifice in Hebrews," *Int* 57 (2003): 251–65; Kenneth L. Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 14–15, 37–38 (cf. Idem, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* [SNTSMS 143; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], esp. 133–43); Thompson, *Philosophy*, 107–8; and Windisch, *Hebräer*, 79, 129.

conceived of Jesus' resurrection. In light of the mention in 6:2 of an eschatological resurrection and judgment, 13:20 might well refer to Jesus' resurrection before his ascension into the heavenly world.<sup>20</sup> If this could be shown, then the writer can be said to have affirmed Jesus' resurrection in the way that the "Passed Over" view thinks.

Loader goes on, though, to argue that such a possibility can be neither proven nor disproven. The author's conception of Jesus' salvation out of death is never made explicit. He writes, "Fest steht: Die Aussagen des Vf über die Erhöhung, die τελείωσις und die jetzige Stellung Jesu sind darin verankert, daß Gott Jesus aus dem Tode herausgeführt hat."<sup>21</sup> Jesus' salvation out of death is therefore clear and central to the argument. The author, however, never explains what Jesus' salvation entailed. Did he think of it as the journey of Jesus' spirit into heaven upon his death? Or, did he view it as an event that involved Jesus' body, perhaps three days later? Loader concludes, "Diese Fragen bleiben offen."<sup>22</sup> When one poses these questions of the text, one discovers that, "Uns fehlt es an ausreichendem Beweismaterial."<sup>23</sup> The author's silence simply does not allow one to know how he conceived of Jesus' resurrection, or if he distinguished between that event and Jesus' exaltation. To draw a firm conclusion one way or the other pushes beyond the evidence of the text.

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<sup>20</sup> Loader, *Sohn*, 54.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 53.

### 1.2.2.1.3 Craig C. Koester

The approach of Craig C. Koester in his recent commentary on Hebrews does not initially appear to be as agnostic as that of Loader. In fact, more than many other interpreters, Koester argues for the significance of Jesus' resurrection for understanding the argument of Hebrews. He suggests that at the level of the writer's hermeneutical strategy, "Hebrews interprets Christ in light of the OT and the OT in light of Christ."<sup>24</sup>

This means on the one hand that,

The author does not begin with a fully developed view of Christ that he then relates to the OT, but discerns the significance of Christ's identity and work by considering them in light of the OT. On the other hand, what God disclosed through Christ is prior to the prophets in importance, so that Christ's life, death and *resurrection* provide the touchstone for understanding what had previously been said in the Scriptures.<sup>25</sup>

It seems, then, that the resurrection forms a crucial element of the writer's hermeneutic. For Koester, the author relies upon the category of Jesus' resurrection when he sets Jewish scripture in dialogue with the traditions he knows about Jesus.

The importance of the resurrection for Koester only appears to grow when he suggests that, "Hebrews takes for granted that Jesus rose from the dead, but he recounts the event in language reminiscent of the exodus (2:14–16; 13:20)."<sup>26</sup> Koester further states, "In 7:1–10 [the author] interprets the story of Melchizedek in Gen 14 in light of the promise concerning 'a priest forever according to the type of Melchizedek' in Ps

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<sup>24</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 117.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* (emphasis added).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

110:4, which in turn is understood in light of Christ's resurrection."<sup>27</sup> For Koester, then, the resurrection appears to be an important category for the author of Hebrews.

When one looks more closely at Koester's explication of the author's argument, however, it becomes difficult to discern exactly what he thinks Jesus' resurrection means in Hebrews. He writes, for example, "The present situation of the ascended Christ cannot be perceived by the senses. But by linking Christ's resurrection to Ps 110:1, Hebrews can speak of the Lord being exalted to power at God's right hand."<sup>28</sup>

This last comment suggests some possible confusion and conflation of the language of resurrection and exaltation in Koester's commentary. Such a suspicion grows when on the one hand he states that in 7:1–10 the writer "interprets the story of Melchizedek in Gen 14 in light of ... Ps 110:4, which in turn is understood in light of Christ's resurrection,"<sup>29</sup> while on the other hand, he concludes that, "The author interprets Gen 14:17–20 in terms of Ps 110:4, and Ps 110:4 in terms of Christ's exaltation."<sup>30</sup>

The ambiguity here between resurrection and exaltation in Koester's interpretation of Hebrews correlates with his conclusion that the author himself holds a vague, perhaps even confused, notion regarding the nature of Jesus' resurrection. When discussing one of the few texts in the epistle that clearly refers to "the resurrection of the dead" (cf. 6:2), Koester argues, "Hebrews' views concerning the mode of resurrection

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 347.

exhibit some of the tensions apparent in other sources.”<sup>31</sup> These tensions basically consist of the conflict between texts that affirm a bodily resurrection that convey “a sense of discontinuity, with resurrection being akin to a new creative act on God’s part,” and other texts that “suggest that after death the person continues to exist in a spiritual state.”<sup>32</sup> In his view, Hebrews exhibits tendencies in both directions. He concludes that, “Hebrews does not resolve the tension between the idea of death and resurrection, which assumes temporal discontinuity between the present and future life, and the idea of ongoing life after death, which assumes considerable continuity in a person’s existence.”<sup>33</sup> In Hebrews, one sees the disparate, perhaps even incommensurable, notions of resurrection attested in the literature of the Second Temple period standing side by side.

Koester might be right. Perhaps the author drew upon conflicting traditions without recognizing the tensions, or without finding them to be at odds in the way they seem to be from our vantage point. Nevertheless, it should be noted that such a blurring of the lines between the categories of resurrection and exaltation help make it possible for Koester to argue that the writer’s exegesis of scripture moves between reality and shadow in such a way that relevant events in the traditions about Jesus can be filled with theological meaning in light of Jewish scripture. In particular this strategy allows the author to describe “Jesus’ death and exaltation in terms of the high priest’s movements on the Day of Atonement.”<sup>34</sup> While the author relies on exegetical methods analogous to

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 117.

others of his time, he ultimately differs from them in that he “insists that the defining element in the end times is Jesus’ death and exaltation.”<sup>35</sup>

Koester thus adheres to the consensus position—Jesus’ death and exaltation are the key categories for this writer. The author’s explication of Jesus’ death and resurrection/exaltation in terms of Yom Kippur make possible the theological conclusions, and in particular the soteriological conclusions, the author seeks to establish. Koester refers to Jesus’ resurrection with relative ease and frequency, yet he never clarifies exactly what this language means. His attempt to leave the ideas of bodily resurrection and spiritual existence in tension is driven by his understanding of the author’s argument. He seems, however, to put the most emphasis on the category of exaltation.

In any case, insofar as Koester’s view remains somewhat unclear about the relationship between Jesus’ resurrection and exaltation, he stands more closely with the conclusion reached by Loader than he does with the majority of other commentators who belong somewhere in this middle ground.

#### ***1.2.2.1.4 Luke Timothy Johnson***

Luke Timothy Johnson’s recent commentary on Hebrews is also difficult to place on the spectrum of opinions about Jesus’ resurrection. On the one hand, he emphasizes the resurrection and even speaks of the import of Jesus’ bodily exaltation. On the other hand, much of his exposition implies both a conflation of resurrection and exaltation and

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 118.



an emphasis on the realm of the spirit over against that of the material realm. These latter moves correlate with his insistence that Hebrews is best understood in terms of Middle Platonic philosophy. I place him in the agnostic category mainly because, on the subject of Jesus' resurrection, his commentary seems unclear.

In his introduction, Johnson claims that, "Hebrews appreciates rather than deprecates the physical. Only because Jesus had a human body could he be a priest ... His body, moreover, is not cast off at death but is exalted: Jesus opens the new and living way to God through the veil that is his flesh."<sup>36</sup> He later adds, "By his resurrection and exaltation, Jesus has entered into the true holy place, which is the presence of the eternal God, with his own blood, ... which he offers for the sins of many."<sup>37</sup>

Such a notion, however, seems at odds with the assumption of the kind of Platonic worldview he thinks the author of Hebrews held. Johnson notes the tension stating, "The Platonism of Hebrews is real—and critical to understanding the argument—but it is a Platonism that is stretched and reshaped by engagement with Scripture, and above all, by the experience of a historical human savior whose death and resurrection affected all human bodies and earthly existence as a whole."<sup>38</sup> Granting that "Middle Platonism" is typified by the diversity of opinion and comment on Plato's texts, one still wonders if the fundamental dualism between the material and spiritual realms that Johnson sees at the center of a Platonic cosmology can really be "stretched and reshaped" to the degree that the confession of Jesus' bodily resurrection and ascension seems to entail. Are we really

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<sup>36</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NLT; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 20.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 21. Johnson later dubs this "biblical Platonism" (*Ibid.*, 173).

dealing with an author whose Platonic dualism is being reshaped by Jesus' exaltation, or might the author's claims be better explained by an appeal to some other set of cosmological presuppositions like, for example, those attested in various forms of Jewish apocalypticism?

I do not mean to imply that one can view "Platonism" and "Apocalypticism" as hermetically sealed ideas that never influenced one another. I only want to suggest that if the confession of the resurrection of Jesus' human body is actually important for Hebrews—not to mention notions like those of the ongoing personal identity of Jesus after his entry into God's heavenly presence, belief in the periodization of ages, apparent belief in a heavenly tabernacle, or belief in Jesus' personal return (cf. 9:28), it seems better to explore the significant cosmological analogies that exist in Jewish apocalypticism before presuming that the author forges a kind of paradigm-breaking Platonism.

These decisions are important because they inevitably color the way one interprets other issues in Hebrews. For example, Johnson often conflates the categories of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation. In his index of subjects, "resurrection/exaltation" are listed together as one topic.<sup>39</sup> While this conflation fits well within the consensus position on Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews, such an approach more easily coheres with a notion of spiritual ascension in which Jesus' spirit immediately enters God's presence at the moment of his death than it does with a confession of the resurrection of his human body.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 402.

More to the point, the supposed fusion of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation in Hebrews appears to align better with some form of Platonism, in which Jesus' spirit can pass immediately into God's presence upon his death, than does the claim that Jesus rose and ascended into God's presence with his human body. One therefore wonders if the conflation of Jesus' exaltation and resurrection in Johnson's commentary might stem from his assumptions regarding the author's use of a Platonist cosmology encroaching upon his claim that Jesus' bodily exaltation actually matters in Hebrews.

Such a suspicion seems to find confirmation when Johnson comments, "[T]he notion of 'eternal' does not mean simply 'everlasting,' but more, a participation in the life that is God's own. Salvation, therefore, is more than possession of the land and success, it is 'heavenly' ... transtemporal because also *transmaterial*."<sup>40</sup> Further, when speaking of Jesus' offering through the eternal spirit (Heb 9:14), he says, "[T]he author [likely] intends to describe the mode of Christ's offering. ... If spirit is the realm of God's existence, then Christ's entry into that presence is appropriately described as 'through the eternal spirit'."<sup>41</sup> And again he says, "The use of 'spirits' [with reference to the righteous in 12:10] simply reminds [*sic*] that the way they now live is as God lives, not in their former mortal bodies but in the dimension of spirit."<sup>42</sup> Those who say such things seem to look for a resurrection in which the stuff of the human body no longer plays a role. It therefore appears that Johnson has actually allowed a his understanding of a Platonic

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 148 (emphasis added).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 332.

worldview to stretch and reshape his claim that Jesus' human body is not cast off at death more than that the author of Hebrews has stretched and reshaped a Platonic worldview.

Johnson's appeal to Platonism on the one hand coupled with his claim on the other that Jesus' body was exalted to heaven is intriguing. Yet, the two assertions stand in tension. Even for Johnson himself one of these claims (that of the importance of Jesus' human body) seems to become obsolete, even to the point of fading away, as his exposition proceeds.

### ***1.2.2.2 Spiritual Ascension Approaches***

A significant number of other scholars find the issue of the relationship between resurrection and exaltation in Hebrews easier to assess. They argue that the evidence in the text indicates that Jesus ascended to the heavenly realm at the moment of his death. In this way they avoid a possible resurrection "gap" between Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross and the atoning work associated with his heavenly exaltation. An interesting divide occurs here between a small handful of interpreters who argue that the author thinks in terms of Jesus' immediate, spiritual ascension into heaven and later bodily resurrection and enthronement/exaltation;<sup>43</sup> and those who argue that, if the writer thinks of Jesus' resurrection at all, he does so completely in terms of ascension and/or exaltation.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See esp. Jeremias, "Zwischen," 194–201; and, Hofius, *Katapausis*, 181 n. 359.

<sup>44</sup> E.g., Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:65; 3:402–3; Hay, *Glory*, 87 n. 149, 90, 146; Nelson, "Offered Himself," 251–65; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 79, 129. Some refer to the "resurrection-exaltation" or "resurrection-ascension" and/or "resurrection/exaltation" as one unified category (e.g., Hay, *Glory*, 146, 148; David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the "Epistle to the Hebrews"* [SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], 111, 129, 191–92; Schenck, *Understanding*, 47). The position of James Thompson likely belongs in this group as well. He argues that the writer endorses a Platonic bifurcation between the material realm and the immaterial realm,

### 1.2.2.2.1 Hans Windisch

In his commentary published in 1931 Hans Windisch argues that the category of resurrection is almost totally ignored in Hebrews in favor of the view that Jesus' spirit ascended immediately into heaven when he died. He writes,

Das Heilswerk Christi ist in kräftiger Konzentrierung als *Selbstdarbringung* des himmlischen Hohenpriesters gefaßt: Mensch geworden, ist er wie ein Opfertier gestorben, um so das kostbare Blut zu gewinnen, mit dem er in das Allerheiligste des Himmels eindringen konnte. Tod und Himmelfahrt umschließen also das Erlösungswerk, die *Auferstehung* ist bei der ganzen Symbolik ignoriert, weil sie die Einheitlichkeit der hohenpriesterlichen Aktion aufheben würde, nur 13:20 ist sie erwähnt. ... Hebr lehrt eine *Himmelfahrt vom Kreuze aus*.<sup>45</sup>

Windisch allows that 13:20 refers to the resurrection.<sup>46</sup> He insists, though, that the author's soteriological concerns make it clear that Jesus entered heaven at the moment of

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and thus prefers to speak in terms of the entry of Jesus' spirit into the realm of heaven. "The author," he writes, "knows a limited period in Jesus' life when he 'shared flesh and blood.' ... This period ended at Jesus' death, when the way into heaven was opened ... and when he entered 'through the curtain, which is his flesh.' ... The death of Jesus is thus an event which spans earth and heaven. It was the time of his leaving the sphere of matter and entering into the heavenly world, as the death and exaltation form one event for the author of Hebrews" (Thompson, *Philosophy*, 107–8).

<sup>45</sup> Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 79 (emphasis original). This citation already shows that in spite of the fact that Windisch allows a possible reference in 13:20 to the resurrection, it is Jesus' direct entry into heaven from the cross that the writer teaches. He later clarifies even further when he states that in Hebrews, "Christus ist durch seinen Tod und seine Himmelfahrt unser wahrer Hohepriester geworden .... Seine Ausführung bedeutet eine für die Christen gemeinde sehr erwünschte Auseinandersetzung mit dem biblischen Opferinstitut, die Paulus merkwürdigerweise umgeht .... Andererseits fehlt in Hebr jede Beziehung auf die Rechtfertigungslehre mit ihren besonderen Voraussetzungen und besonderen Folgerungen; die Heilswirkung des Todes Christi wird nicht durch seine Auferstehung, sondern durch seine Himmelfahrt gesichert" (129; cf. Mathias Rissi, *Die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs: Ihre Verankerung in der Situation des Verfassers und seiner Leser* [WUNT 41; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987], 61–81, esp. 80–1).

<sup>46</sup> Windisch notes that the variant in 13:20 that reads ἐκ τῆς γῆς instead of ἐκ νεκρῶν "würde auch hier die Auffahrt ohne Grablegung und Auferstehung lehren," though he seems unwilling to adopt the variant (*Hebräerbrief*, 121). Nevertheless, this "einzige Hindeutung" to the resurrection in Hebrews at 13:20 is not significant for Windisch, apparently because it can be explained as "eine biblische-liturgische Formel" (*Ibid.*). Windisch does not explicitly say so, but he seems to suggest that the liturgical nature of 13:20 implies that the reference to the resurrection is present only because it is part of a formula and is not, therefore, of great significance for the argument in the rest of the text.

his death. Jesus' death and entry into heaven are the two key redemptive events and they correlate well with the pattern of sacrifice on Yom Kippur. In Hebrews, the unity of these two moments is essential for Jesus' high priestly activity (his death and offering) to be held together. The resurrection as a category or event distinct from Jesus' entry into heaven is virtually unthinkable because it would destroy the crucial unity of Jesus' high-priestly work.

#### ***1.2.2.2 Otfried Hofius***

Otfried Hofius agrees with Windisch that the unity of Jesus' death and heavenly offering are crucial for the author's argument. He differs, though, in proposing that 13:20 proves that the author nevertheless affirmed Jesus' bodily resurrection. Following the suggestion of his *Doktorvater*, Joachim Jeremias, Hofius argues that the author held the view that Jesus' spirit ascended to heaven at the moment of his death. His spirit was later reunited with his body at the resurrection and he then reascended. In Hofius' words,

Für die Karfreitags- und Ostertheologie des Hebräerbriefs und seine Lehre vom Selbstopfer des Hohenpriesters Jesus stellt sich das so dar: Jesus stirbt am Kreuz ... und fährt unmittelbar danach auf zum himmlischen Allerheiligsten, wo er selbst διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ... sein eigenes Blut darbringt .... Es handelt sich hier also um eine Aussage über "das im Tode vom Leibe getrennte πνεῦμα Jesu" .... Bei der Auferweckung Jesu, die Hebr 13,20 erwähnt wird, sind dann Leib und πνεῦμα Jesu wieder miteinander vereinigt worden.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Hofius, *Katapausis*, 181 n. 359. Hofius is here especially dependent on the arguments of Jeremias, "Zwischen," 194–201 (see also Idem, *Der Opfertod Jesu Christi* [CwH 62; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1963], 5–10).

Thus, by decoupling Jesus' spiritual ascension into heaven from his exaltation to the throne at God's right hand, Hofius is able preserve the unity of Jesus' death and atoning offering while also creating a place for a reference to Jesus' resurrection in 13:20.<sup>48</sup>

### **1.2.2.2.3 Erich Grässer**

Erich Grässer's more recent commentary on Hebrews takes issue with such an assessment. Grässer is willing to allow for some distinction between the soteriological significance of Jesus' ascension and his exaltation. He writes, "Jesu Sterben am Kreuz vor den Toren Jerusalems ... ist Voraussetzung für die Selbstdarbringung seines Blutes im himmlischen Allerheiligsten, wird als solches aber nicht soteriologisch expliziert. Konsequenterweise bleibt die Himmelfahrt, die Jesus in sein Position am Altar Gottes bringt, nicht bloße Umschreibung für die Erhöhung."<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, for the author of Hebrews it is clear that, "Auf die Erniedrigung Jesu folgt sofort die Erhöhung."<sup>50</sup>

A thorough distinction between Jesus' spiritual ascension from the cross and exaltation is therefore difficult to maintain. The homily gives no hint of the kind of split Hofius proposes. In Grässer's view, the possible distinction between ascension and exaltation is overshadowed in any case by the fact that it is ultimately Jesus' presence and work in heaven that brings the fullness of redemption.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, in 13:20, by way of an

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<sup>48</sup> For an especially clear and succinct presentation of this implication see Hofius, *Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6–11: Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms* (WUNT 17; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1976), 85 n. 42, where, on the basis of Heb 13:20, he comments, "Setzt der Hebräerbrief die Auferweckung voraus, so ist es nicht zulässig, die Selbstdarbringung des Blutes im himmlischen Allerheiligsten und die Inthronisation Jesu unmittelbar miteinander zu verbinden bzw. den Ascensus ... und die Erhöhung einfach gleichzusetzen."

<sup>49</sup> Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:65.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:66.

allusion to Isa 63:11, “formuliert unser Verf. die zentrale Heilsaussage als Einheit von Kreuz und Himmelfahrt.”<sup>52</sup>

All of this suggests that, “Die Auferstehung bleibt außer Betracht bzw. ist mit der Himmelfahrt identisch.”<sup>53</sup> In Grässer’s opinion, even at 13:20, the one place in Hebrews where there is a possible reference to the resurrection,<sup>54</sup> “bleibt das zentrale soteriologische Motiv vom Sühnetod gewahrt.”<sup>55</sup> Jesus’ death, ascension, and exaltation all contribute to the atonement this author claims that Jesus effected. No one of these points can be extricated from the complex imagery the author uses in the way Hofius proposes.

#### ***1.2.2.2.4 Richard D. Nelson***

The basic approach of Hofius has not been widely adopted. That of Grässer and Windisch, though, is hardly limited to the realm of German scholarship on Hebrews. In a recent article, Richard D. Nelson presents a case for conclusions very similar to those just reviewed. Nelson argues that in Hebrews two key rituals detailed in biblical texts “provide templates for describing the sacrifice of Jesus: the Day of Atonement as described in Leviticus 16 and the ceremony of covenant confirmed by sacrificial blood in Exod 24:3–8.”<sup>56</sup> The former ritual is of special note because it involved three constitutive

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 3:402.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 1:65.

<sup>54</sup> Grässer seems to allow that 13:20 is a reference to the resurrection, but he ultimately leaves the question open commenting, “Richtig dürfte sein, daß unser Verf. mit dem ἀνάγειν ἐκ νεκρῶν zugleich die Erhöhung zur Rechten des Vaters aussagt” (Ibid., 3:402).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 3:403.

<sup>56</sup> Nelson, “Offered Himself,” 252.



actions or movements: the slaughter of the sacrifice, the entrance of the high priest into the inner sanctuary, and the sprinkling of the victim's blood in the Holy of Holies.

According to Nelson the author of Hebrews fuses these three elements of Yom Kippur with an early Christian christological pattern of humiliation and exaltation<sup>57</sup> to form the mold into which the writer presses Jesus' sacrifice and priestly ministry—i.e., his death/humiliation = the sacrificial slaughter, his ascension = the entry into the inner sanctuary, and his purification for sin = the sprinkling of blood. This entire movement, or sequence of events, only comes to completion when Jesus sits down at God's right hand. The author of Hebrews, then,

[B]inds Christ's cross and exaltation as elements of a single sacrificial script and as successive stages in a "single sacrifice" ... and a "single offering" ... made "once for all." His willing death was the first phase of a complex priestly action that continued in his ascension through the heavenly realms and entrance with blood into the heavenly sanctuary. It concluded with a decisive act of purification and being seated beside God's throne, where Christ can continually intercede for his followers.<sup>58</sup>

The continuity of Jesus' suffering and exaltation are forged by the unity of Jesus' death and exaltation. Moreover, this unity proves essential for the soteriological claims of the author.

In Nelson's view, Hebrews' fusion of Yom Kippur with the early christological pattern of humiliation-exaltation explains the letter's relative silence on the resurrection.

As a result of his concern to show that Jesus' sacrifice fits the pattern of the Day of

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<sup>57</sup> Nelson, in keeping with many other scholars, sees parallels between the essential down-up/humiliation-exaltation model he finds in Hebrews with other "traditional hymnic creeds of humiliation and exaltation" such as Phil 2:6–11 (Ibid., 253).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 255.

Atonement ritual, the author “unites Christ’s resurrection and exaltation/ascension into a single concept (13:20).”<sup>59</sup> According to the liturgy of Yom Kippur, it is only after the slaughter of the sacrificial victim that the high priest can then enter the inner sanctuary to offer the blood. Since this is the next moment in the sacrificial script, the resurrection gets collapsed into the category more useful for the writer’s theological purposes—Jesus’ ascension into heaven. While my own position differs significantly from that of Nelson, it should be noted that Nelson’s emphasis on sacrifice as a process that encompasses multiple events represents a far more careful and astute assessment of Hebrews’ appeal to Yom Kippur than that of many other interpreters.

#### ***1.2.2.2.5 Kenneth L. Schenck***

Another version of the view that Jesus’ resurrection is equated with his heavenly exaltation can be found in Kenneth Schenck’s recent introduction to Hebrews entitled *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon*. For Schenck, the author’s sermon draws upon a larger, implicit narrative about God’s redemption of humanity through Jesus. Jesus’ sacrificial death stands for this writer as “the climactic moment of the entire story.”<sup>60</sup> He goes on to add that, in contrast to other early Christian texts that attest clear distinctions among the events of Jesus’ death, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly session, “In Hebrews it is difficult to break down this saving moment into separate events.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Schenck, *Understanding*, 14; cf. Idem, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 188.

<sup>61</sup> Schenck, *Understanding*, 14.

The source of this difficulty lies at the heart of the author's theological project. To quote Schenck,

[T]he author of Hebrews integrates these separate events together by using them to construct a metaphor in which Christ's death is a sacrifice offered in a heavenly tabernacle on a decisive "Day of Atonement." The whole movement from Christ's death to his "session," or seating, at God's right hand thus functions somewhat as a single event in the plot.<sup>62</sup>

Yom Kippur language is therefore employed metaphorically in order to explicate the soteriological significance of Jesus' death. As Schenck clarifies,

Christ's death *is* an atoning sacrifice for sins and Christ *does* pass through the heavens to the throne of God ... but it is on a metaphorical level that the author understands this sequence of events to be the slaughter of an animal that is brought through a sanctuary into a heavenly Holy of Holies. ... References to this metaphorical event are thus a complex, yet relevant way for the author to argue that Christ's death is an efficacious atonement for sins.<sup>63</sup>

The literal death of Jesus finds its meaning when the categories and practices of Yom Kippur are metaphorically applied to it.<sup>64</sup>

This metaphor creates a tension in the argument that "approaches a contradiction."<sup>65</sup> Because Jesus' death was a physical event that occurred on earth, Hebrews "both affirms that physical blood is essential for atonement and yet holds equally that Christ's work was of a spiritual nature in the heavens—not the created realm."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 14–15.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 15 (emphasis original).

<sup>64</sup> In *Cosmology and Eschatology* Schenck makes clear that the orienting metaphor for the references to the tabernacle and the Levitical sacrifices in Hebrews is that of Jesus as high priest (esp. 145, 168, 180–1).

<sup>65</sup> Schenck, *Understanding*, 35.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

The tension cannot ultimately be resolved. Schenck suggests, however, that the writer's dualist cosmology helps explain the way in which he held the two aspects of the story together.<sup>67</sup> The material realm is evil and stands under the dominion of the devil. Christ was sent into this realm to be tested and yet remain sinless so that his spirit could ascend back to heaven and open the way of salvation for the rest of humanity. While Jesus' blood or physical death forms an essential component of the redemptive act and can even be viewed as its climatic moment, it is nonetheless "through the eternal spirit that he offers himself blameless to God."<sup>68</sup> Jesus' death and spiritual ascent into heaven constitute his offering of that sacrifice to God. The importance of this spiritual ascension is highlighted by the fact that, "Even the allusion to Christ's resurrection in Heb. 13:20 uses a word that pictures Christ's spirit coming up spatially from the realm of the dead rather than the more usual word for resurrection that had overtones of re-embodiment."<sup>69</sup>

All of this sharpens the clarity of the author's soteriology and highlights the fittingness of the tension created by his metaphorical application of Yom Kippur to Jesus. In Schenck's words, "One might almost say that human salvation is the removal of one's

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<sup>67</sup> Schenck argues cogently against a simple identification of the author's cosmology as Platonic in *Cosmology and Eschatology* (e.g., 117–20, 165–67). He nevertheless concludes that Hebrews attests a sharp spatial dualism between the spiritual and material realms. He argues that in Hebrews the created realm itself is intrinsically linked with the human problem the Son's sacrifice resolves (128–29). The human being (as flesh and spirit) participates temporarily in this dualism (133–39). Thus the heavenly Son also participated temporarily in the flesh (i.e., he took on a human body) in order to redeem human spirits from the fleshly realm (i.e., give them salvation) which is destined for destruction. It is not clear on this model, however, why it would be necessary for the Son to participate in the flesh, or why the human spirits are not free to ascend to heaven on their own once their flesh is destroyed (on this point see the discussion of Ernst Käsemann's position below).

<sup>68</sup> Schenck, *Understanding*, 37–38.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

spirit from the power and influence of the created realm and the devil that seems to control that realm.<sup>70</sup> To effect so great a salvation,

God prepared a body for Jesus, like the flesh and blood of humanity, so that he might destroy the devil and his power over the creation. Christ underwent the human experience. . . . As he approached death, he prayed to the one who could save him out of that realm. God heard his prayer and brought his spirit up from the realm of the dead, creating a way to the heavenly realm that was not previously open.<sup>71</sup>

The bodily and the spiritual parts of Jesus' humanity both have a role to play in the redemptive act, though the foregoing comments indicate that ultimate redemption entails the flight of the spirit out of the material realm.

Recognizing the way in which the author uses Yom Kippur enables one to see not only why the death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Jesus are fused together as one event in Hebrews, but also how this one event functions in the author's soteriology. His appeal to Yom Kippur as a metaphor allows him to hold together and explain Jesus' death and spiritual entry into heaven as the means by which God has conquered the devil and opened a path for the ultimate exaltation of other human spirits to escape from the world and enter the heavenly realm.

### ***1.2.2.3 Assessment***

The diversity of opinion among those in this broad, middle category makes a blanket assessment and critique difficult. The agnostic position is appealing at first glance. The paucity of reference to Jesus' resurrection does complicate simple

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 39.

conclusions regarding the way that the author envisioned Jesus being led out of the dead. This position, however, fails (as do many others) to note that Heb 1–2 poses a clear contrast between the angelic *spirits*, not one of whom has ever been invited to sit on the throne at God’s right hand, and the blood-and-flesh Son, Jesus, who, as a human being, presently sits on that very throne. This contrast, which I discuss in chapter two of this study, implies that the author’s conception of the mode of Jesus’ entry into heaven is more carefully thought out than either Loader or Koester suppose. Put differently, the writer’s case for Jesus’ elevation to God’s right hand falls apart if he envisions Jesus in heaven as only a spirit himself.

The argument of Jeremias and Hofius that the writer conceives of Jesus’ spirit entering heaven to present his sacrifice and then being rejoined with his body three days later distinguishes between Jesus’ offering before God in heaven and his exaltation. Such an interpretation, however, pushes the meaning of Heb 13:20 beyond what it can bear. Their solution gives the appearance of making Hebrews cohere with other early Christian evidence, but there is no evidence within Hebrews that supports it. Moreover, texts like Heb 1:3 and 8:1–2 give the reader the strong impression that the atoning offering of Jesus and his heavenly session cannot be parsed out as neatly as Jeremias’ and Hofius’ solution demands.

Most of those surveyed in this section argue that the categories of Jesus’ resurrection, ascension, and exaltation are merged into one by the author—who clearly gives primacy of place to the category of exaltation. The writer conceived of Jesus’ death as the moment of his spirit’s passing out of this world and into the realm of heaven. Thus

his death, atoning offering, and exaltation are bound so closely together that no clear distinctions can or should be made between them.

When taken broadly, this approach has much to commend it. Not only does it provide an explanation for how Jesus' death and exaltation are held together as a unified sacrificial/atoning event, it also explains why Jesus' resurrection could be mentioned in passing in 13:20. That is to say, the writer conceives of Jesus' "resurrection" in terms of Jesus' spirit flying off to heaven. This interpretation takes seriously the possibility that, in keeping with the evidence of texts like *Jubilees* and the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the author of Hebrews did not deny the category of resurrection so much as conceive of it in spiritual terms. Such a view of the afterlife not only fits well in the broader milieu of the Jewish Diaspora—where cosmologies influenced by Platonism might be expected, it provides a plausible context within which this author could have viewed resurrection, ascension, and exaltation as virtually interchangeable terms.

This understanding is nonetheless open to critique on two different fronts. First, if it can be shown that the presence of Jesus' human body in heaven is significant for the author, and that the concepts of atonement and exaltation remain distinct in his argument, then the case for the conflation of resurrection, ascension, and exaltation (particularly insofar as this case depends on a spirit/body dualism in which salvation consists of the separation of the spirit from the body of blood and flesh) collapses. Regardless of how one interprets Hebrews, the text contains indications that the salvation of human bodies matters to the author (see especially 10:22 where bodies need to be purified with water). More to the point, however, I argue in this study that, far from suggesting that the

importance of the incarnation of the Son ends with his death, the author seeks to present a case for how Jesus resolves the dualism the writer recognizes between heaven and earth and between angels and humans. His answer, I argue, turns on the promise, common in Jewish apocalyptic literature, that the created realm will one day be transformed and infused with God's glory such that it will no longer be impure/subject to death and decay. Jesus is the first member of humanity to transition from a mortal, human body to an indestructible one—no longer subject to the one who holds the power of death.

A second objection on a different front may also be raised. It is unclear on the terms of such explanations why the language or category of "resurrection" should even be invoked. Several scholars point out that, apart from the comment in 13:20, where it must be admitted the traditional language of "resurrection" does not occur, there are no other references to Jesus' resurrection in the homily. Therefore they argue that it is inappropriate to appeal to the language of resurrection at all. The author, they suggest, intentionally steers clear of that category because he does not think in terms of resurrection. I turn finally to examine this end of the spectrum.

### ***1.2.3 No Resurrection of Jesus in Hebrews***

In contrast to the "Passed Over" view and in distinction from those who think the author confesses Jesus' resurrection but defines the event in terms of spiritual life after death are those who think the author has deliberately avoided applying the terminology of "resurrection" to Jesus. In place of the language/concept of resurrection, they argue, stands the idea of the transition of Jesus' spirit out of the earthly realm and into heaven,



or perhaps just the theological significance such an idea might imply.<sup>72</sup> The author does not confuse or conceive of this transition in terms of resurrection.

For those who hold this position Heb 13:20 serves as an important text. In fact, one of the strengths of this approach is its consistency in interpreting this verse. Adherents locate 13:20 within the kind of christological and soteriological argument, which all sides tend to agree the author develops throughout the homily, better than those who appeal to this verse as evidence that the author really did confess Jesus' resurrection, even though it plays little or no role in his argument. In keeping with the context of the rest of the letter—and especially with the author's goal of explicating the spiritual meaning of Jesus' death as the atoning sacrifice—proponents argue that 13:20 further supports the claim that Jesus' spiritual ascent/transition from the cross into heaven ultimately matters most for the author's Christology and soteriology. Various strategies are invoked to make this case.

### ***1.2.3.1 Georg Bertram***

In a 1926 essay dedicated to Adolf Deissmann, Georg Bertram argued succinctly for a variant of the position just presented:

Im Hebr-Brief ist weder von Auferstehung noch von Auferweckung Jesu die Rede, die eine Stelle 13,20, die vielleicht ein Hinweis auf Auferstehung oder Auferweckung sein könnte, ist in ihrer Terminologie alttestamentlich bestimmt, "Hinaufführen von den Toten" scheint die ursprüngliche Lesart zu sein; daß dabei das Grab oder der Hades nicht vorausgesetzt zu sein brauchte, zeigt eine alte

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<sup>72</sup> E.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 405–6; Georg Bertram, "Die Himmelfahrt Jesu vom Kreuz aus und der Glaube an seine Auferstehung," in *Festgabe für A. Deissmann zum 60. Geburtstag 7. November 1926* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), 187–215, here 213–15; Herbert Braun, *An die Hebräer* (HNT 14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 30, 308, 478; Ulrich Luck, "Himmlisches und irdisches Geschehen im Hebräerbrief," *NovT* 6 (1963): 192–215, esp. 211–13; Käsemann, *Gottesvolk*, 66, 152–54.

Variante, die im Zusammenhang des ganzen Briefes jedenfalls die Stelle richtig exegesiert,<sup>73</sup> indem sie von einem Hinaufführen von der Erde spricht. Im Hebr-Brief wird aber auch deutlich ... das der irdische Leib Christi ... keine positive soteriologische Bedeutung haben kann.<sup>74</sup>

Thus Bertram appeals to the actual terminology of 13:20, as well as to the context of the argument of the rest of the letter, to argue that the earthly body of Christ does not matter for the soteriology presented in Hebrews.

At the level of terminology Bertram notes that the language of being led up (*hinaufführen*) out of the dead in 13:20 does not require the assumption that Jesus was raised out of the grave or out of Hades. Additionally, in light of the larger context of Hebrews, he suggests that the variant reading in 13:20—that Jesus was “led up from the earth” rather than “led up from the dead”—is an appropriate gloss on the text, even if it is not likely to be the original reading. The point in Hebrews, in other words, is not that Jesus’ body rose out of the grave, but that Jesus was lifted out of the material realm/the earth. The key axes for salvation are therefore Jesus’ death and the transition of his spirit out of his mortal body into the glory of the heavenly realms.

As the block quotation above indicates, the human body of Jesus does not play a meaningful role in the atonement. In fact, Bertram claims that at other points in the text (e.g. Heb 12:2) one finds that “Kreuz und Erhöhung einander entsprechen.”<sup>75</sup> Following Harnack, Bertram thinks the earliest Christian proclamation of salvation focused on the shedding of Jesus’ blood. Thus he claims, “Der Tod Jesu hat dann nur Sinn als Mittel zur

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<sup>73</sup> Bertram refers here to the variant that reads “ἐκ τῆς γῆς” in 13:20 instead of “ἐκ νεκρῶν.”

<sup>74</sup> Bertram, “Himmelfahrt,” 213–14.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

Gewinnung des Opferblutes.”<sup>76</sup> Jesus’ embodied suffering and death were only the means to procure the all-important blood. It follows, then, that Jesus’ human body does not need to go with him into heaven. The author’s argument transcends the kind of historical categories that tend to be correlated with the proclamation of Jesus’ resurrection. In Bertram’s words, “Die Terminologie des Hebr-Briefes setzt weder die Geschichte von der Grablegung noch die Visions- und Auferstehunglegenden voraus. Die ihr zugrunde liegende Vorstellung von dem Ausgang Jesu ist die von seiner Erhöhung vom Kreuz in den Himmel.”<sup>77</sup>

In this way the essence of the gospel in Hebrews can be seen to reflect the concerns of the earliest community of believers. Bertram’s broader study, which looks at several other early Christian texts, concludes in part,

[D]aß unter den Vorstellungen, die sich die älteste Gemeinde über den Eingang Jesu in die himmlische Herrlichkeit machte, neben der Auferweckung oder Auferstehung und der Himmelfahrt vom Grabe aus oder nach einem kürzeren oder längeren Zeitraum in bestimmten Ueberlieferungsschichten die Vorstellung von der Himmelfahrt Jesu vom Kreuz aus eine bedeutsame Stelle eingenommen hat. Sie entspricht dem Glauben an das Thronen Jesu zur Rechten Gottes und an seine eschatologische Wiederkunft. Mit dieser Zurücktreten dieser Vorstellungen hinter der von der Gegenwart des Herrn im Kultus mußte auch die Himmelfahrt vom Kreuz aus der Auferstehung weichen.<sup>78</sup>

Thus the earliest Christians did not find it necessary to clarify how notions of Jesus’ exaltation fit together with traditions about his resurrection or a period of time before his ascension. Their eschatological understanding of Jesus pushed out any historical concerns they might have had. This is why, “Es stehen im Urchristentum nebeneinander

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 216.

verschiedene Anschauungs- und Ausdrucksformen, die alle dem Glauben an den Erhöhten entspringen.”<sup>79</sup> Only as early Christians began to think more and more about the contemporary presence of Jesus with their communities did their own interest in the idea of Jesus’ resurrection begin to eclipse that of his direct spiritual ascension from the cross, a trend that only grew as some groups began to set traditions about the ascension of Jesus from the cross against those of his resurrection (e.g., docetism and Gnosticism).

Bertram’s view is, therefore, similar to that of Windisch discussed above. Like Windisch (and, on this point, virtually everyone else), Bertram assumes that the moments of the cross and Jesus’ ascension into glory are the center of Hebrews’ soteriological reflection. In Hebrews these moments are, at points, effectively a unit (“Kreuz und Erhöhung einander entsprechen”). The subject of Jesus’ human body—and thus also in Bertram’s view, that of his resurrection—is not an issue for reflection in Hebrews because Jesus’ body has no significant, distinct role to play in the author’s conception of the salvation Jesus effected. The main purpose for Jesus’ human body was so that he could die/his blood could be shed.

Unlike Windisch, then, Bertram sees no need to speak in terms of Jesus’ resurrection in Hebrews. Since Hebrews does not use the language of resurrection with respect to Jesus, for us to do so is to speak in theological and historical-critical anachronism. Jesus’ ascension is the distinct, meaningful category in Hebrews.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

### ***1.2.3.2 Ernst Käsemann***

Somewhat in contrast with Bertram's account, Ernst Käsemann's classic study on Hebrews *Das wandernde Gottesvolk: Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief* posits that the writer of Hebrews has co-opted the Gnostic myth of the redeemed redeemer from his Hellenistic culture in order to explicate Christology and the message of the Christian kerygma within that cultural context. The concerns of the writer are driven by the exigencies of the expansion of Christianity within the Greco-Roman world. As such, Hebrews provides evidence for an early Christian appropriation of Gnosticism. This theological conscription creates some tensions in the Christology of the work, but Käsemann's main interests are first, to demonstrate that many of Hebrews' distinctive characteristics (e.g., the motif of wandering people of God, high-priestly Christology, almost total silence regarding the resurrection) result from this adoption of Gnosticism; and second, to show how Hebrews uses the Gnostic myth critically to maintain Christianity's counter-cultural witness within a Hellenistic environment.

In order to understand his approach to the issue of Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews, it is important to look briefly at his understanding of the language of perfection in the epistle. He argues that the use of this terminology in Heb 5:9 and 7:28 makes it clear that Christ's perfection is linked with his being elevated to the positions of Son and high priest. It follows that perfection is connected to the realm of heaven.<sup>80</sup> The perfection language of Hebrews therefore points to a radical dichotomy between the earthly and the

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<sup>80</sup> Käsemann, *Gottesvolk*, 59, 84.

heavenly realms. Only things attaining and pertaining to the heavenly sphere can be described as “perfect.”<sup>81</sup>

This idea of attaining the heavenly realm is central to the writer’s project. In fact, his use of the Gnostic myth allows him to characterize the present state of believers as “wandering” through the material world *toward* their heavenly inheritance. Christ, the redeemed Redeemer, identifies with God’s people. At his death, he ascends out of the earthly realm and into the heavenly one, thereby leading the way for all of his followers.

Käsemann is clear that Hebrews’ use of this myth does not result in the letter’s endorsement of a Gnostic cosmology or of the Gnostic notion of the preexistence of souls.<sup>82</sup> The point of identity between Jesus and his followers is not, as in the Gnostic myth, a divine spark or eternal, immortal soul. Neither, though, is it in his becoming flesh and blood *per se*. Rather, the concrete, historical act of Jesus’ incarnation, especially insofar as this entailed his existential experience of suffering/humiliation, forms the link between Jesus and his siblings.<sup>83</sup> As in the Gnostic myth, Jesus’ death achieves the conquest of death on behalf of his followers, which involves being freed from the material realm. Unlike that myth, however, Jesus’ death also, and most importantly, serves as an atoning sacrifice.<sup>84</sup> Thus for Hebrews—and here Käsemann identifies the rub of the gospel message in a Hellenistic environment—perfection is not achieved simply by escaping the material realm. Before one can escape from that realm, the issue of sin must

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 86–87.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 112–13.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 104–5.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 144.

be addressed. Moreover, the goal of one's escape is not simply that of leaving the world behind, but of entering into God's presence.

The traditional affirmation of Jesus' resurrection has no role to play in this contextualized portrayal of the redemption Christ effected. Indeed, given this larger Hellenistic context, it is hardly accidental that the author pushed aside Jesus' resurrection in favor of a greater emphasis on his exaltation. In Käsemann's words, "Das Schema des Anthropos-Mythos wird in Hebr. auch darin durchgehalten, daß auf die Erniedrigung Christi unter Außerachtlassung der Auferstehung oder besser unter ihrer Einbeziehung in die Himmelfahrt alsbald die Erhöhung folgt."<sup>85</sup> For the sake of clarification he further notes that Heb 13:20 in no way argues against such a displacement (*Verdrängung*)<sup>86</sup> of the resurrection. That verse "besagt doch nur, daß die Erlösung in der Himmelfahrt sofort an Jesu Tod anschließend gedacht wird, daß also die Auferstehung von der Himmelfahrt gleichsam aufgesogen wird."<sup>87</sup>

At first blush Käsemann's statements may lead one to think that he belongs with those whom I have categorized as standing between the two poles of the spectrum on account of his apparent allowance that Jesus' resurrection has been redefined in terms of his exaltation. Yet, as he explains what he means by the writer's *Verdrängen* and *Ausserachtlassung* of the resurrection, it becomes clear that he is arguing for more than a spiritual redefinition of the category of resurrection.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 66 n. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

In Käsemann's judgment, one of the key concerns of the author is to impress upon his audience that the ubiquitous Gnostic redeemer myth of their Hellenistic culture does not ultimately provide the redemption it promises. The flaw in the myth concerns its assertion of and dependence upon the notion of the immortality of the individual soul. In terms of the myth, all one needs to do to be saved/attain perfection is extricate one's eternal soul from its material prison. The gospel message, however, challenges the myth at precisely this point. From the perspective of Christ, the eternality of the soul's existence is not the final guarantee of salvation. The problem the gospel makes clear for Hellenists is that the real wall between God and humanity is not the problem of material per se, but that of sin. Sin is the fundamental hindrance to entry into God's presence, a factor with which the Gnostic myth cannot deal. Only Christ's sacrificial death and priestly ministry serve as the pledge that guarantees the attainment of the eternal heavenly homeland. In short, only Jesus' death, not something inherent to the spiritual element of human ontology, makes it possible for the individual to escape the material realm where death reigns.

For Käsemann, the author's concern to show how the gospel message both critiques the Gnostic myth and, at the same time, provides a more certain pledge or guarantee of salvation explains why it is that, "*der ganze Brief auf die Botschaft vom himmlischen Hohenpriester ausgerichtet und erscheint diese Botschaft in der Form eines λόγος τέλειος.*"<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 153 (emphasis original).



Grasping the centrality of this emphasis further clarifies why it is “daß die Verkündigung der Auferstehung demgegenüber fast völlig zurücktritt.”<sup>89</sup> The message of Jesus’ resurrection retreated in the face of this newly contextualized form of the gospel message because the writer recognized that in the environment of the “hellenistisch- gnostische” world, “Die Botschaft vom auferstandenen Christus allein brauchte hier also kein Ärgernis mehr zu halten wie für Judentum.”<sup>90</sup> That is to say, the author knew “daß man diese Botschaft [der Auferstehung] nur zu leicht im hellenistischen Sinne verfällchen und aus der metaphysischen Lehre von der Ewigkeit der präexistenten Seele mißverstehen konnte.”<sup>91</sup>

Hebrews’ high-priestly Christology has therefore been deliberately crafted to take the place of the category of the resurrection in Christian proclamation in order to protect the integrity of the gospel’s counter-cultural message. In its original Jewish context, the message of the resurrection of the particular, concrete, crucified man Jesus was inherently offensive and counter-cultural. In the Hellenistic world, this proclamation was too easily misconceived in terms of the immortality of the soul. Jesus’ ascension could be easily misunderstood in terms of the prototypical piercing of the material barrier between the realm of perfection and the souls imprisoned in the material realm. The Gnostic myth allowed the resurrection to be understood in terms of the opening of the way through this barrier for all souls to follow. In such a context the message of Jesus’ resurrection was

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

too easily misunderstood as little more than the ultimate victory of the immortal soul over the material realm.

The writer anticipated (or faced) this problem and sought to preserve the gospel's inherent offense within the culture of Hellenism by shifting the emphasis of the message from the resurrection to the idea he develops in the homily—the high priesthood of Christ. This updated kerygma presents earthly existence not in terms of enslavement to matter, but in terms of enslavement to sin—a notion offensive to Hellenism. By way of this newly contextualized proclamation, the author succeeded in preserving “die konkrete Realität der nur konkret und vom Einzelnen zu erfassenden Vergebung.”<sup>92</sup> Such a reprimed gospel makes clear to individuals that they each stand in need of concrete forgiveness, not just the release of their souls from the material world. Moreover, in a Hellenistic context Jesus' atoning death on the cross, which implied that Jesus' death was actually a sacrificial act and not just the stripping off of the mortal body, was deeply troubling.<sup>93</sup>

The author of Hebrews, then, deliberately displaced Jesus' resurrection with the proclamation of Jesus' sacrificial death and high-priestly ministry. In the Hellenistic context of the Gnostic myth of the redeemed redeemer, this move seemed necessary in order to protect the essence of the gospel message in a way that the earlier proclamation of the resurrection, adequate in a Jewish context, was not sufficiently equipped to do.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 153–54.

### ***1.2.3.3 Harold Attridge***

Harold Attridge, while not endorsing the particular theological explanation offered by Käsemann, also argues that the author of Hebrews deliberately speaks in terms of Jesus' exaltation instead of his resurrection. Attridge characterizes the Christology of Hebrews as consisting of antinomies or fissures.

He notes, for example, that vv. 1–3 of the exordium in Heb 1 manifest a very “high” Christology of the Son’s preexistence that even appears to go so far as to affirm the divine character of the Son. Yet, in 1:5–13 the text’s focus on the Son’s exaltation “seems to suggest that his status as Son is dependent on that exaltation.”<sup>94</sup> This latter emphasis, along with the writer’s interest in Jesus’ humanity and suffering, implies a “low” Christology that stands in tension with the earlier claims to divinity and preexistence in Heb 1. Additionally, a fundamental tension in the Christology that correlates with the “high”/“low” antinomy shows up in the author’s attempt to present Jesus’ high-priestly ministry in connection with both his heavenly exaltation (e.g., 5:6; 7:26; 8:4; 9:12, 24) and his earthly life (e.g., 2:17; 10:5–10).

The explanation for these tensions, Attridge suggests, lies in the author’s creative appropriation of preformed christological traditions in the course of developing his high-priestly Christology. Much of content of the writer’s Christology comes from “the proclaimed faith of the community addressed,”<sup>95</sup> particularly in the form of early Christian confessions and liturgies. Attridge finds it probable, for instance, “that the title

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<sup>94</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 25.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

of high priest was a part of this traditional christological *mélange*” that “apparently provided our author the springboard for his own creative work.”<sup>96</sup> This editorial process already creates tensions, but the two developments the writer makes in the course of combining the traditional material contribute to the logical fissures in his homily.

The author’s first creative contribution is to enhance the exaltation motif he introduces in Heb 1. In correlation with that tradition, he goes on to compare Jesus to the figure of Melchizedek in Heb 7. This move has the effect of further magnifying the exalted, heavenly character of Christ. Such a development of the motif of exaltation, particularly with its emphasis on Jesus’ ongoing ministry in the heavenly realm, enables the author to depict Christ as “a heavenly being, whose priesthood is of the realm not of flesh but of ‘indestructible life’ (7:16) or ‘spirit’ (9:14).”<sup>97</sup> The author’s presentation of the heavenly Christ coheres well with what Attridge takes to be the likely content of the traditional material about Jesus’ high priestly work—making intercession on behalf of the saints.<sup>98</sup>

Before moving to examine the author’s second creative development, one should note that the language of perfection in Hebrews is, in Attridge’s opinion, to be understood primarily in connection with this exaltation motif. He comments, “Hebrews’ use of perfection language is complex and subtle and does not simply reproduce any of the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Attridge thinks such this conception of Christ probably developed in early Christian liturgy as a result of reflection on Second Temple speculation regarding the priestly service of angelic beings in the heavenly realm (Ibid., 99–100, 103, 211).

perfectionist ideals of the first century”<sup>99</sup> such as wholeness, an ethical ideal, an educational ideal relating to human development, Levitical consecration, or death. There is, however, a clear relationship between Christ’s perfecting and his service as high priest that suggests that, “Christ’s perfection . . . may be understood as a vocational process by which he is made complete or fit for his office.”<sup>100</sup> In the particular case of Jesus this process does not imply “a moral dimension, but an existential one. Through his suffering Christ becomes the perfect model.”<sup>101</sup> Importantly, the moment of Jesus’ exaltation, the moment when he entered into the honor and glory of the heavenly realm, consummates his perfection. This is, in other words, the moment at which he was finally and fully perfected. The primary theological significance of Jesus’ perfection in Hebrews only becomes obvious as it is “explicated in terms of Christ’s priestly access to the transcendent realm of God’s presence.”<sup>102</sup> As will become clear, this notion of Christ’s perfection enables the writer to link the heavenly exalted ministry of Christ with his other addition to the traditions he inherited.

The second novel christological contribution of the author concerns his development of the notion of likening Jesus’ death to an atoning sacrifice. He makes this move by elucidating the significance of the earthly work of Jesus in light of the Jewish high priesthood and the sacrificial system, especially the sacrifice of Yom Kippur. To quote Attridge again, “In developing the notion of Christ as High Priest within the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

framework of the Yom Kippur ritual, the focus of [Jesus'] priestly activity is shifted to his sacrificial death."<sup>103</sup> The notion of Jesus as high priest in terms of Yom Kippur therefore allows the author to explain Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice. Moreover, this earthly aspect of Christ's work enables the writer to unpack for his readers the ethical implications of Christ's priesthood, and thus also to draw upon the traditions about Jesus' crucifixion for parenetic purposes.

But building these two developments with and upon the various traditions the author inherited produces the irresolvable tensions that lie at the heart of his high-priestly Christology. Specifically, in setting this high-priestly perspective—with its emphasis on Jesus' death—alongside his heightening of the earlier exaltation tradition, the author inevitably creates antinomies in his argument. It is clear for Attridge, though, that the writer simply “is not concerned to provide a systematic reconciliation of differing presuppositions and implications of the High-Priest title.”<sup>104</sup>

For Attridge, Hebrews' newer “picture of the High Priest who enters the true heavenly sanctuary through his willing self-sacrifice holds both the divine and the human, the eternal and the temporal, in tension.”<sup>105</sup> It should be noted, however, that Attridge finds this tension theologically fruitful for the author. By presenting Jesus in these terms, the writer is able to focus on the theoretical and spiritual implications of

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 146–47. I argue in this study that the writer's appeal to Yom Kippur has exactly the opposite effect. The Yom Kippur rituals do not emphasize the slaughter of the sacrificial victim; they emphasize the presentation or offering of the sacrifice in the presence of God. The author consistently speaks of Jesus “offering” or “presenting” (προσφέρω) something (e.g., blood, body, self) before God (see my discussion of this verb in section 4.3.1 n. 30).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

Jesus' priestly ministry (e.g., the new covenant, internal cleansing), while at the same time emphasizing his earthly role as the Son who is to be imitated by other members of God's new family. For Attridge, "The complex high-priest motif in Hebrews ... holds together the most fundamental affirmations of the work."<sup>106</sup> In other words, the way this author develops his discussion of Jesus in terms of Yom Kippur and his corresponding high-priestly Christology enables him to hold the crucifixion together with Jesus' heavenly exaltation.

Yet, this fissure-fraught Christology has implications for the question of the role of Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews. As with others mentioned above, Attridge notes that the verb the writer uses in 13:20 is not commonly associated with resurrection. Instead of the more typical term ἐγείρειν ("to raise"), which the author does use in one of the few places in the letter where he plainly mentions some kind of resurrection (11:19), he opts for the verb ἀνάγειν ("to lead up") in 13:20. Regarding the phrase ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν, Attridge comments, "The *avoidance* of the verb [ἐγείρειν] in this phrase, which refers to God's 'leading up' (ἀναγαγὼν), is no doubt deliberate. It conforms to the tendency of Hebrews, which has so consistently used language of exaltation not resurrection for the act whereby Jesus' sacrifice is consummated and he himself 'perfected'."<sup>107</sup> Because the author has modeled his portrayal of Jesus as high priest on the sacrifice of Yom Kippur, he has been able to bind Jesus' death together with his exaltation and perfection and thereby to interpret the cross as an atoning sacrifice

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 406 (emphasis added).

consummated in heaven. This move obviates the resurrection. The author, therefore, deliberately and consistently refers to Jesus' heavenly exaltation in its stead.

#### *1.2.3.4 Assessment*

Although the particulars of Käsemann's Gnostic myth proposal have not held up well, the general thesis that the author of Hebrews displaces the category of Jesus' resurrection with that of his exaltation has three main strengths. First, in keeping with the consensus, this interpretation explains how the writer employs the imagery of Yom Kippur to explicate Jesus' death as an atoning act of self-sacrifice. Second, like several of the approaches catalogued above in the agnostic and spiritual ascension positions, this reading avoids the complicating problem of the "Passed Over" view—a resurrection "gap" between Jesus' sacrificial death and heavenly offering/exaltation. Third, this position consistently explains Heb 13:20 in light of the fact that there is no prior reference to Jesus' resurrection. Unlike those who fall somewhere in the middle of the spectrum I set out above, this interpretation has the benefit of not having to suppose that 13:20 introduces a reference to Jesus' resurrection quite literally out of nowhere. If prior to 13:20 there are numerous references in Hebrews to Jesus' exaltation but no references to his resurrection, then the author's choice of ἀναγεῖν, especially given his earlier use of ἐγείρειν to refer to some kind of resurrection, seems likely to be another reference to Jesus' exaltation. To assume an allusion to the resurrection here presupposes the author's affirmation of the event even though the text does not appear to warrant such an assumption at any other point. The writer simply has no use for Jesus' resurrection and displaces it with the category of his exaltation.



Nonetheless, while the approach to the question of Jesus' resurrection may appear more consistent, other problems remain unaddressed. For example, the author clearly affirms the reality of some kind of future resurrection (cf. 6:2; 11:35). Given that the writer works hard to present Jesus' own humanity and experiences as a model for those who are his brothers and sisters, is it really likely to be the case that he conceived of resurrection as something that pertains to those who are faithful like Jesus, but not to Jesus himself?

It is also worth noting that the use of ἀναγεῖν to denote resurrection is not without parallel. In Rom 10:7 Paul uses the same collocation of terms (ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναγαγεῖν) when speaking with reference to Jesus' resurrection. Conceivably, then, another early Christian could do the same thing. Moreover, attempts to exclude any notion of resurrection from the phrase ὁ ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν simply because the verb is ἀναγεῖν fall afoul of the kind of category mistake inherent in the fallacy of confusing words and concepts.<sup>108</sup> To recognize the words “leading out” and “of the dead,” and then to ask, “But where is the resurrection?” may be tantamount to recognizing a mass of individual trees, but then asking where the forest is. This issue is all the more pressing when such an exclusion of resurrection requires one to imagine an early Christian community that either knows a resurrectionless proclamation about Jesus, or an author who is intentionally trying to reshape the traditional proclamation about Jesus in such a way as to displace the resurrection (so Käsemann, Attridge).

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<sup>108</sup> See the now famous criticisms of the word-concept fallacy in James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 206–19, esp. 263–64.

Put differently, what else are early Christians likely to think when they encounter the collocation “the one who led [Jesus] out of the dead” (Heb 13:20) than Jesus’ resurrection? The mode of that event may be unclear, but surely some notion of resurrection is the most likely referent for this collocation of terms. To push the point further, if the author of Hebrews is deliberately avoiding the language of Jesus’ resurrection because he wants to displace belief in that event with the confession of Jesus’ exaltation, he has done a poor job communicating that point in 13:20. The subtle shift in his language from the verb ἐγείρειν when he speaks of God as being able “ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγείρειν” (Heb 11:19) in the case of Isaac, to the verb ἀναγεῖν in his closing depiction of God as “ὁ ἀναγαγὼν [Jesus] ἐκ νεκρῶν” is not likely to be an effective strategy for conveying to the audience anything other than some concept of Jesus’ resurrection.

In addition to this point, however, one sees in this larger interpretive position (as in the others) a commitment to the idea that sacrifice, and in particular the sacrifices of Yom Kippur, are fundamentally about death. The assumption seems to be that the death of Jesus is what atones and that his death correlates with the slaughter of an animal victim in rituals of blood sacrifice. Recently, however, several scholars, especially those who study blood sacrifice as depicted in the Hebrew scriptures and/or in ancient Israelite religious practice, have noted that the death of the animal is not an atoning event. Atonement depends primarily upon the proper manipulation and presentation of blood, which is equated with life (e.g. Lev 17:11). I correlate these findings with Hebrews in chapter four of this study. For now, however, I would point out that the drive to hold

Jesus' death closely together with the image of Jesus as the high priest presenting the blood in the holy of holies on Yom Kippur may be misguided. Such an assumption may result from certain a priori theological commitments about the place and role of the cross in Hebrews that come more from a traditional, Protestant reading of Paul than from the author of Hebrews. At the very least it is worth noting that if the writer does not think of Jesus' blood in terms of Jesus' death, or of the cross as the place of atonement, then some of the very tensions identified by Attridge as integral to the Christology of Hebrews resolve themselves.

### ***1.3 Summary: Many Explanations, One Common Assumption***

The evidence presented in the foregoing discussion attests the diversity of views regarding the presence of Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews. The overwhelming consensus in contemporary scholarship holds that the author makes little or no reference to Jesus' resurrection. Disagreement arises when talking about what one can or cannot conclude from this strange silence. Amid the disagreement, however, one point of unanimity lies in the primary rationale for why Jesus' resurrection is not a significant event or category for this author: to the extent that the writer's portrayal of Jesus as the great high priest intends to identify Jesus' death on the cross as the moment of self-sacrifice that ultimately atones for sin, the resurrection of Jesus is unnecessary.

By virtue of casting Jesus in the role of the high priest who enters the holy of holies with the sacrificial blood to accomplish atonement on Yom Kippur, the author is able to utilize the category of Jesus' heavenly exaltation as a lens for clarifying the spiritual significance of the cross. Yom Kippur allows the writer to hold Jesus' death and

exaltation together as two moments that correspond to the central events of the atonement liturgy—the slaughter of the victim and the presentation of its blood in the holy of holies. It follows that these two crucial poles—Jesus’ death and subsequent exaltation as the priest-king in heaven—form the axes around which the argument of Hebrews turns. The particular ways in which the writer is thought to be relating these two categories and thus explicating the soteriological significance of Jesus’ death diverge. The recognition of a two-stage down-up or humiliation-exaltation movement at the heart of Hebrews’ Christology, however, is virtually axiomatic. Such a Christology appears to be the *sine qua non* for the explanation of the atoning significance of the cross.

The importance of this basic stance for the question of Jesus’ resurrection is clear. This element of early Christian proclamation is not a key piece in the argument of Hebrews because the author’s emphasis on the atoning significance of Jesus’ death and heavenly exaltation does not require him to engage in any extended reflection on that event. The application of the double-foci of Yom Kippur to Jesus’ death and exaltation pushes the writer to pass seamlessly from the crucifixion to Jesus’ entry into heaven. The notion of Jesus’ priestly atoning work thought to be developed by the author explains the paucity of reference to Jesus’ resurrection in Hebrews.

#### ***1.4 Conclusion***

The case laid out in this study proceeds in three chapters. In chapter two I will highlight the overlooked significance of Jesus’ humanity in heaven for the logic of Heb 1–2. In Hebrews, the Son’s elevation above the angelic spirits is correlated with his humanity. It is Jesus’ perfected humanity, his blood and flesh (i.e., his human body), in

heaven that sets him apart from the heavenly spirits and allows him to be the first human being to dwell fully in God's presence and to obtain the fullness of God's promises. Jesus entered the world to come when he ascended into heaven and, as a human being, was invited to reign and rule over that world.

Second, in chapter three I will establish that the kinds of concerns underlying the author's arguments regarding Jesus' entry into heaven cohere with those seen in Jewish apocalyptic ascension accounts from the Second Temple period. In particular, I claim that the writer is actively adapting a tradition about Moses ascending into heaven. I point out further that references to Jesus' resurrection may be identified in Hebrews. I show that Jesus' resurrection forms an essential element in the writer's argument for Jesus' high-priestly status.

Third, in chapter four I will address the question of the author's understanding of Jesus' atoning work. I argue that Hebrews does not locate the moment of atonement at the point of Jesus' death on a cross. The crucifixion is of great import for this writer, but not because it can be easily fit into a two-stage model of the Yom Kippur sacrifice. Rather, Jesus' suffering exemplifies his greatest moment of testing and faithful endurance. As a result of his obedience in suffering, God rewarded him with the "better resurrection." In his suffering, Jesus stands as the example of the righteous sufferer *par excellence*. Furthermore, Jesus' death is identified by the author as the trigger that sets into motion the chain of events that culminates in atonement. Jesus' resurrection, however, marks a central moment in the larger sequence put into motion by Jesus' crucifixion. Because Jesus' human body rose to indestructible life, he is able to present

his blood (which in sacrificial contexts is language for life, not language that symbolizes death), his body, and himself in the very place where the author says he presented these things—before God *in heaven*. Jesus' atoning offering occurred precisely where the author depicts it occurring—in heaven, not on the cross.

In sum, this study argues that the writer of Hebrews identifies Jesus' death as the moment that puts into motion a series of events that ultimately result in his exaltation to the throne at God's right hand. These events are Jesus' bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, presentation of his atoning offering—his very *life*—and session at God's right hand. The resurrection is *the* event that qualifies him to become the high priest he now is. The ascension takes Jesus' immortal humanity into heaven. Because he has arisen into his high priesthood, Jesus entered into God's presence in heaven. There he made his atoning offering. After making that offering, he took his seat at the throne at God's right hand. The final event, for which the author waits, is the moment when the living Jesus will return to earth and bring salvation—the fullness of all of God's promises—to those who faithfully endure in their confession of him.

I propose, therefore, a substantive rereading of this homily. Hebrews is not, as so many have supposed, oriented around a two-stage Christology, nor does the explication of Jesus' atoning offering in the latter portion of this epistle simply, or even primarily, show how Jesus' death is soteriologically meaningful in sacrificial terms. Instead, the robust narrative substructure of the singular Christology and soteriology developed in this early Christian masterpiece should be identified as encompassing, in a proto-credal sequence, the full sweep of the significance of the Son's incarnation. For the author of

this homily, the heavenly Son came into the world, suffered and died, rose again, ascended into heaven, made his offering for eternal atonement, and sat down at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there, the author avers, he will come to judge the living and the dead. This is the outline of the author's Christology and the context in which he works out his understanding of how Jesus effected atonement.

## **2. ANGELS, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND THE AGE TO COME IN HEBREWS 1–2**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

In the preceding chapter I surveyed the positions of modern commentators on Hebrews regarding the presence and significance of Jesus' resurrection in this sermon. I argued that, in spite of their differences, most interpreters see little or no reference to Jesus' bodily resurrection in Hebrews, and find even less significance attached to the confession of this event for the Christology and soteriology the writer develops.

The primary goal of the next two chapters is to challenge that consensus by establishing both the presence and importance of the resurrection of Jesus' human body in Hebrews, and by exploring some of the particular contributions this affirmation makes to the high-priestly Christology uniquely expounded in this homily. A close reading of Heb 1–2 and Heb 5–7 suggests that two central concerns the author seeks to address are 1) the rationale for Jesus' exaltation above the angels, and 2) the means by which Jesus was able to obtain his position as high priest. While chapter three of this study primarily examines the latter of these concerns, the present chapter focuses on the former.

In this chapter I argue that the author advances the somewhat surprising claim that Jesus' elevation to a status above the angels follows from the fact that when he ascended into heaven, he entered that realm as a human being. That is, unlike the angelic spirits, Jesus is a human being. Only as a human being is he qualified to be elevated above the



angels and to accede to the throne at God's right hand. Two interrelated arguments will establish this thesis.

First, I explicate the contrast between the Son and the angels in the author's argument in Heb 1–2. In Heb 1 the author stresses the spiritual nature of the angels. In Heb 2, he emphasizes the Son's assuming blood and flesh. The Son, in other words, became a human being, a being with a kind of body that was susceptible to corruption, suffering, and death. Jesus was, in every respect, like every other human being, albeit without sin (4:15). Many commentators rightly note that the Son's experience of human mortality qualifies him in some way for his high-priestly ministry.<sup>1</sup> Not only must he be human to be a high priest (5:1), his personal acquaintance with temptation and suffering enables him to be a merciful and faithful high priest (2:17), one who understands human frailty and can offer help to those who come to him in their time of need (2:18; 4:16).

I, however, demonstrate that while the points just delineated are not incorrect, the majority of modern commentators have failed to apprehend that the author adduces an additional rationale for why the Son must be human—namely, to qualify him to be elevated above the angels and reign over the world to come. I will argue that the contrast between the Son and the angels primarily concerns the kind of beings humans are (which includes blood and flesh) and the kind of beings angels are (i.e., πνεῦμα).

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<sup>1</sup> It is not uncommon to identify the primary import of the Son's humanity, and his suffering in particular, as the precondition of his being *merciful and faithful* in his role as high priest, not as a precondition for his being a high priest per se (e.g., Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress], 95; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* [WBC 47A; Dallas: Word, 1991], 54, 64; H. -F. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* [15th ed.; KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991], 223–24).

Second, I study the conception of a coming world or age attested in other texts from the Second Temple period. Such a survey shows that some Jews, who were near contemporaries with the author of Hebrews, envisioned the “world to come” as the eternal and incorruptible fulfillment of God’s promise to give Israel a land for its inheritance. When this promise finally comes to fruition, the descendants of Abraham will assume their rightful place above all of God’s creation, including the angels. I show that this logic is rooted in an Adamic typology often overlooked by interpreters. Once this typology is recognized, however, the fullness of the author’s eschatological hopes and the logic and imagery of his argument in Heb 1–2 can be explained.

I begin, then, by exploring the contrast the author presents between the “ministering spirits” and the exalted Son.

## ***2.2 Contrasting the Son and the Angels: The Argument of Hebrews 1***

In Heb 1:2 the writer introduces a being identified as a “Son” (υἱός) through whom God now speaks in these last days. It quickly becomes apparent that this individual is not just any son. Rather, this Son has been appointed heir of all things. He was also, though, the one through whom God created all things. The author goes on to describe him as an individual who radiates the fullness of God’s glory, bears the image of God’s being, works to sustain all things, made purification for sins, and then sat down on the throne at God’s right hand (1:3). Such an introduction implies that this Son is some kind of highly exalted heavenly being.

The writer further develops this implication in 1:4 where he asserts that the Son has become (γενόμενος) greater than the angels insofar as he has inherited a name that is

greater than any of theirs. The elevation of this Son even partly consists in God's exhortation to the angels to worship him as he is ushered "into the world" (εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην, 1:6). This contrast between the Son and the angels drives the rest of Heb 1. Yet, the exact status and identity of the Son remain a mystery at this point in the text. Who and what is this Son, and why has he been exalted above the angels?

As the author continues to highlight the distinction between the Son and the angels, he emphasizes the close association of the Son with God. Thus he asserts in 1:8 that the Son has a throne and is addressed as ὁ θεός by the words of Ps 45:6 (44:7, LXX). In v. 10 the Son is addressed with the words of Ps 102:25–27 (101:26–28, LXX) as "Lord" (κύριε), is credited with having laid the foundations of the created realms (cf. 1:2), and is acclaimed as never changing. Thus at various points and in many ways the author portrays the Son in Heb 1 as acting and being addressed as though he were on par with God himself.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Bauckham attempts to understand Heb 1 in terms of the divine identity categories he argues are ubiquitous in Second Temple Jewish sources. This rightly discerns the need for the Son to be both divine and human in his sonship ("The Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* [ed. Richard Bauckham, et al; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 15–36. His assumption that the elevation of the Son to the throne above the angels is related primarily to his identity with God (apparently as opposed to his identity as a human being, 23), however, fails to do justice to the texture of the argument of Heb 1. This is even more the case for his view that the high priesthood of Jesus as argued in Heb 7 has to do with the Son's divinity (27–32). The Son's elevation to the throne and high-priestly ministry may not be exclusive of his divine identity, but, as I argue below, the author of Hebrews puts the spotlight in both cases on the humanity of the Son. In general, Bauckham does not appreciate the importance of Heb 2 for a full understanding of the motif of the Son's elevation above the angels (e.g., 21; I note as well his silence regarding the divine image language of Heb 1:3), or the importance of Jesus' resurrection for his high-priestly status. His attempt to see the Son as fully God and fully human in Hebrews mistakes the way this homily applies the kind of pressure that produces later christological and Trinitarian formulations with the text of Hebrews itself (on this larger point see C. Kevin Rowe, "Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics," *ProEccl* 11 (2002), 295–312; cf. L. D. Hurst, "The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2" in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird* (ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright; Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 151–

Other statements, however, complicate a simple equation between God and the Son. For example, the author sets up what appears to be a temporal and logical sequence of events that culminates in the elevation of the Son to his position above that of the angels. In 1:3 the collocation of the aorist adverbial participle ποιησάμενος with the aorist finite verb ἐκάθισεν portrays the Son's assumption of the throne at God's right hand as taking place *after* he had performed some activity that effected purification for sin.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the writer maintains that God appointed (ἔθηκεν) the Son heir of all things (1:2) and elevated him to a status above that of any of the angels. Thus, he became greater (κρείττων γενόμενος) than the angels and has inherited (κεκληρονόμηκεν) a greater name than any of them (1:4). In 1:9 he is said to have been anointed by God in a way greater than any of his peers.<sup>4</sup> These comments imply a sequence of events in which the Son's status relative to that of the angels and his peers actually changed. Such points create difficulties for a simple assumption of parity between the Son and God.

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64, who notes, “[T]he epistle contains language which, as proper to God’s pre-existent wisdom, can be seen as the beginning of a process which will end at Chalcedon. Notwithstanding this, there is a case to be made that the *emphasis* of Heb. 1 lies elsewhere, and that the entire chapter has too often been read in light of Nicea and Chalcedon” (155, emphasis original).

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 71; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 15.

<sup>4</sup> I discuss the referent and meaning of μέτοχους in more detail below. Here I note that the μέτοχοι are not likely to be the angels because the author stresses twice that God addressed the Son in ways that he has never addressed *any* angel (cf. 1:5, 13). If the angels are the Son’s peers, the logic of the divine speech in 1:5 and 13 becomes incoherent—God’s speaking to the Son would, by definition, be an instance where he addressed one of the angels in the ways the author says he has never addressed *any* angel. For a defense of the μέτοχοι as angels see, e.g., Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2/70; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 121 n. 188; Jean Héring, *L’Épître aux Hébreux* (CNT 12; Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1954), 26.

Some have argued that the resolution of this tension between the Son's divine characteristics and heavenly exaltation lies in the conclusion that the Son is some kind of extraordinary heavenly being who has been exalted above all other heavenly beings to a position second only to that of God. If Heb 1 were the only part of this text to have come down to us, the conclusion that the author attests Jewish speculation regarding the hierarchy of heavenly beings, and perhaps also a kind of angel Christology, might be valid.<sup>5</sup>

In Heb 2, however, the author provides some potentially startling information that sheds more light on the question of the Son's identity. This exalted heavenly individual is none other than the particular human being, Jesus (2:9). One might have expected the argument to continue developing along the lines of the distinctions between the heavenly Son and the other heavenly beings in terms of the divine attributes of the Son. Yet, in Heb 2, the author takes an unexpected turn when he specifies that a crucial element in the contrast between the Son and the angels is the recognition that the Son has blood and flesh and therefore does not participate in the nature of angels (cf. 2:14–16).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> So Timo Eskola who assumes the author targets certain opponents who confuse Jesus with other highly exalted angelic figures (*Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Discourse* [WUNT 2/142; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001], 210–11). See also Hugh Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 41–42. For a thorough rehearsal of the relevant secondary literature see the extensive footnotes in Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, 124–25. Stuckenbruck concludes that a polemic concerning Jesus and the status of the angels is in play but that, “It is impossible to decide between argument against a veneration of angels and an ‘angel Christology’” (137).

<sup>6</sup> I discuss the issue of the Son's not participating in the nature of the angels in greater detail in section 2.5. Here I note the curious collocation of αἷμα καὶ σὰρξ. The author's reference to these often paired terms reverses the order one usually expects (viz. σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα; cf., e.g., Sir 14:18, 17:31; Matt 16:17; 1 Cor 15:50; Gal 1:16; though see Eph 6:12). The fronting of blood in Heb 2:14 may well foreshadow the

That the Son's nature is not angelic and that the writer views this as the important difference between the Son and the angels is already anticipated in Heb 1 when he sets up a puzzling dichotomy in 1:7 and 1:8–9 between the *spiritual* nature of the angels and the Son's place on the divine throne at God's right hand. In 1:7 God's angels are, in the words of Ps 104:4 (103:4, LXX), identified, on the one hand (μέν), as beings created by God (ὁ ποιῶν) as spirits (πνεύματα) and ministers (λειτουργοί). The angels are beings who are flames of fire (πυρὸς φλόγα). Hebrews 1:8–9 addresses the Son, on the other hand (δέ), as possessing an eternal throne and being anointed by God παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου (cf. Ps 45:6–7 [44:7–8, LXX]).

The contrast here is between the angels as “ministering *spirits*” and the Son's invitation to sit on the throne at God's right hand. Yet, the juxtaposition of spirits and the Son's royal status appears to be a non sequitur. Indeed, many assume the locus of the contrast inheres in the distinction between the angels as *created* beings and the eternal Son who was God's agent of creation (1:2).<sup>7</sup> God made (ποιῶν) the angels, they argue,

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emphasis the writer will put on Jesus' blood as the chief element he offered to God in heaven in order to effect atonement (see my discussion of this in section 4.3.2 below).

<sup>7</sup> For example, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 58–59; Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer (Hebr 1–6)* (EKKNT 17/1; Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1990), 81–82; James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (CBQMS 13; Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982), 134–36. This recognition is not incorrect. As the being through whom God made all things, the Son must also be the one who made the angels. Reducing the distinction between the Son and the angels to this point, though, fails to give full weight to other details in the text. By itself, the writer's μέν ... δέ construction in 1:7 and 8 is ambiguous. That is, “making” versus the “ruling” *could* imply that the focus of the contrast rests on the Son's status as eternal creator and the angels' status as created beings. But, as I discuss in more detail below, the repetition of the motif of the Son's status as ruler and the angels' status as ministering πνεύματα in Heb 1:13–14 suggests that the nub of the contrast between the Son and the angels is actually the spiritual constitution of the latter, not the fact of their creation per se. To anticipate, the

while the Son is addressed as “God” and has an eternal throne in 1:9. Thus, because the Son himself is uncreated from eternity and participated in the act of creating all things, God invited him to sit upon the heavenly throne. Two factors, however, indicate that the Son’s eternal nature per se is not the fulcrum around which the difference between the angels and the Son pivots in the author’s argument.

First, the statement in 1:9 regarding the Son’s being exalted above his peers or companions (μέτοχοι)<sup>8</sup> muddies a clear contrast between the identification of the Son as eternally divine and the angels as created beings. The Son has peers. There are others like him. Whoever these peers are, their very plurality suggests that they are also created beings (i.e., not the one creator God). Moreover, the rhetorical questions of 1:5 and 13—

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reason no angel has ever been invited to reign at God’s right hand is because of their spiritual nature. As the writer goes on to emphasize in Heb 2, the Son differs from the angels on precisely this point. Unlike the angelic πνεύματα, he is a human being—he has blood and flesh (2:14, 16–17). Since God promised humanity royal standing above the angels (Heb 2:5–9), it further follows that the humanity of the Son—where this involves not an existential experience, but an ontology that includes a body of blood and flesh—is the real point behind the distinction between the ministering spirits and the Son’s invitation to rule on the heavenly throne.

<sup>8</sup> The meaning and referent of μέτοχοι is debated in the commentary literature. Here the comparative sense of the preposition παρά and the modification of its object (μέτοχους) with the genitive σου suggest a partitive idea. The Son is one among many, and in particular, the specific one from the group who was anointed. While μέτοχος can have an abstract meaning (“sharing in,” “partaking of”), it can also carry the more concrete meaning of “a partner” (so LSJ s.v. “μέτοχος”). This latter meaning makes especially good sense in this context where one member (σου) of the group of μέτοχοι is anointed beyond (παρά) the others. But who are the others/μέτοχοι? Many assume that, given the context, the word must be used with reference to the angels (e.g., Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 30; Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:86, see also 86 n. 109). Riggensbach, however, insightfully observed, “Um so weniger darf man die μέτοχοι nach der Meinung des Vf auf die Engel deuten, die diesem ja nicht als Söhne (v. 5), sondern als relativ untergeordnete Diener (v. 7 u. 14) gelten. Vielmehr kann nur an die Menschen gedacht sien, an deren Niedrigkeit Christus einst teilhatte (2, 9–13), und die er nun zu Genossen seiner Seligkeit und Herrlichkeit macht (3, 14)” (Eduard Riggensbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* [3d ed.; Kommentar zum NT 14; Leipzig: A. Deichertsche, 1922], 24). As Riggensbach points out, the interpretation of the μέτοχοι as humanity fits much better with the larger context than the view that the term refers to angels. Moreover, as pointed out above (see n. 4), it coheres better with the author’s comments that God has spoken to the Son in ways that he has not spoken to any of the angels.

“when did he say to *any* of the angels”—imply that the peers mentioned here are not angels, for if they were, the Son’s being designated “Son” and being invited to sit at God’s right hand would stand as instances of God doing the very thing vv. 5 and 13 say he has never done—elevate *any* of the angels to the throne at his right hand. Something, therefore, distinguishes the Son, and presumably also his peers, from the angels.

Second, at two other places in Heb 1 the author contrasts the Son’s royal position as the one sitting at God’s right hand with the relatively lower position of the angels. The first of these occurs in 1:3–4. Here, the Son’s elevation above the angels immediately follows a reference to his act of sitting at the right hand of the Most High. In 1:13–14, the author presents a second instance of a distinction between the Son and the angels that more clearly indicates that the difference between the Son and the angels consists in his position as royal ruler and the angels’ spiritual nature. In language reminiscent of 1:7–9, he asserts by way of a rhetorical question that no angel was ever invited to sit where God invited the Son to sit—on the throne at his right hand. By way of contrast, the angels are only “ministering spirits” (λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα) who are servants (διακονία) of those who are about to inherit salvation. The repetition of the λειτουργ- root and the noun πνεύματα in 1:14 (cf. 1:7) indicates the importance of this language for the author vis-à-vis the angels. Scripture, specifically Ps 104:4, identifies the angels as spirits—flames of fire—who are ministers. None of these spirits has ever been invited to sit on the heavenly throne.

The real crux of the distinction being drawn in Heb 1 between the Son and the angels therefore concerns the Son’s royal position at God’s right hand and the angels’



spiritual nature. The angels' nature as ministering *spirits*, in other words, somehow sets them apart from the Son and his peers and, for some as yet unidentified reason, precludes them from obtaining the royal status given to the Son. What, though, allows the author to determine that the angels' spiritual nature and God's invitation to the Son to sit on the heavenly throne are mutually exclusive?

An examination of the continuity of the argumentation in Heb 1 and 2 brings the underlying logic of the distinction between the Son and the angels into sharper focus. Once one recognizes that the argument begun in Heb 1 for the royal elevation of the Son over the angelic spirits continues to be developed in Heb 2, the central tenet for the author's case for the Son's exaltation above the angels comes into view.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, the writer bases the fundamental contrast between the Son's invitation to sit upon the heavenly throne and the angels' lower position on the fact that the latter are *spirits*, while the former is a human being—blood and flesh (Heb 2:14). To grasp this point more fully, it is necessary to discuss the relationship between the argument and motifs presented in Heb 1–2.

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<sup>9</sup> Commentators generally recognize that the contrast between the Son and the angels continues in some way to be in view in 2:5–9 (see, e.g., Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 144–45; Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:112–13; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 89; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 43–45). As I argue below, one of the primary problems with many interpretations of Heb 2 is the assumption that as the argument for the Son's exaltation continues in Heb 2, the author shifts the emphasis off of the Son's intrinsically divine qualities and onto his human qualities. This, I suggest below, mistakes the heart of the distinction between the Son and the angels. The contrast, I argue, is between the Son's elevation to the royal throne and the angels' spiritual nature. Once this is recognized, the progression of the argument from Heb 1 to Heb 2 becomes clearer. The author's emphasis on the humanity of the Son in Heb 2 is the rationale for his elevation above the angels in Heb 1.

### 2.3 Hebrews 1:6 and 2:5: One Οἰκουμένη or Two?

One of the first clues that Heb 2 further develops the contrast between the Son and the angels detailed in Heb 1 lies in the writer's use of the term οἰκουμένη in 2:5. Here he states that the οἰκουμένη to come (ἡ οἰκουμένη ἢ μέλλουσα) will not be subjected to the *angels*. Earlier in Heb 1:6 he referred to the Son as the “firstborn” (πρωτότοκος) whom God directed the angels to worship upon his being brought into the οἰκουμένη. The repetition of the latter term in 2:5 together with a reference to the relative status of the angels suggests that the usages of the term in 1:6 and in 2:5 share the same referent. This conclusion is hotly disputed in the secondary literature. It is therefore necessary to discuss briefly the various interpretive positions regarding the meaning of οἰκουμένη in 1:6 and 2:5.

#### 2.3.1 Surveying the Land: Three Views on Hebrews 1:6 and the Οἰκουμένη

The author's use of the term οἰκουμένη in 1:6 and the location and time of the Son's entry into it have been interpreted in three different ways. The primary options advanced in the modern secondary literature are that the author refers 1) to the Son's entry into the earthly realm at his incarnation;<sup>10</sup> 2) to the Son's return to the earthly realm at his parousia;<sup>11</sup> and 3) to the Son's ascension back into the heavenly realm.<sup>12</sup> The first

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<sup>10</sup> So, for example, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 56; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 10–11; G. B. Caird, “Son by Appointment,” in *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke* (ed. William C. Weinrich; 2 vols.; Macon, Ga.: Mercer, 1984), 1:73–81, here 75–76; C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux: II.—Commentaire* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1953), 17.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Héring, *L'Épître*, 25; Ernst Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk: Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief* (FRLANT 55; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 68–69; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (14th ed.; KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 113; Alexander Nairne,

two positions share a common assumption—the term οἰκουμένη refers to the earth, specifically the portions of the earth inhabited by humans. Over against this, adherents to the third view generally claim that in this context the word connotes heaven, the uncreated realm where God and the angels dwell. Each of these views will be summarized and scrutinized in light of its fit with the larger context.

### **2.3.1.1 The Incarnation Interpretation**

The first view noted above correlates the worship of the angels with what is taken to be the humiliation phase of the author’s two-stage Christology. The Son’s condescension to participate in the suffering of the human condition is connected with God’s command to the angels to worship him. The greatest strength of this interpretation lies in the fact that outside of Hebrews the term οἰκουμένη typically denotes those parts of the earth that are inhabited by human beings (i.e., the spheres of civilized or ordered

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*The Epistle of Priesthood: Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 43, 206; B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (3d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1903), 21–23.

<sup>12</sup> See P. C. B. Andriessen, “La Teneur Judéo-Chrétienne de He I 6 et II 14B–III 2,” *NovT* 18 (1976): 293–313, here 293–95; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 58; Ardel B. Caneday, “The Eschatological World Already Subjected to the Son: The Οἰκουμένη of Hebrews 1.6 and the Son’s Enthronement,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (ed. Richard Bauckham, et al; LNTS 387; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 28–39; David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews”* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 96–97; Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:78; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 79; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 192; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 27–28; Meier, “Symmetry and Theology in the Old Testament Citations of Heb 1:5–14,” *Bib* 66 (1985): 504–33, esp. 508–9; Franz Joseph Schierse, *Verheissung und Heilsvollendung: Zur theologischen Grundfrage des Hebräerbriefes* (Munich: Zink, 1955), 96; Albert Vanhoye, “L’οἰκουμένη dans l’Épître aux Hébreux,” *Bib* 45 (1964): 248–53.

human habitation, as opposed to the wastes and wild lands).<sup>13</sup> On lexical grounds, then, they argue that the use of οἰκουμένη in Heb 1:6 most probably refers to the earthly realm of human habitation as well.<sup>14</sup> Some adherents of this interpretation also point out that the particular phrase used in 1:6—εἰσαγαγεῖν εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην—can function as the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew phrase לְעוֹלָם לְבָיִת, sometimes used with reference to the birth of a child.<sup>15</sup> A few proponents have even attempted to draw parallels between Heb 1:6 and the angelic praise, depicted in Luke 2:8–14, at the announcement of Jesus’ birth.<sup>16</sup>

One significant problem with this interpretation comes from its lack of fit with Heb 2:6–9. Here the writer applies Ps 8:7 to the Son in such a way as to identify his entering into the realm of humanity as a brief period of time (βραχύ τι)<sup>17</sup> during which

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<sup>13</sup> This is a commonly attested meaning of the word (see LSJ s.v. “οἰκουμένη”).

<sup>14</sup> E.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 56; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 45–46; Spicq, *L’Épître*, 2:17.

<sup>15</sup> See especially Spicq, *L’Épître*, 2:17 who quotes a second century C.E. saying attributed to Eleazar ben Azaria (he provides no citation information). The use of the phrase for birth is clear in the *Mekilta* (see, e.g., Bahodesh 5.100–101). Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 10, also notes parallels in Greek literature where the verb εἰσαγγέλλω is used with reference to childbirth (e.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.*, IV. I. 104).

<sup>16</sup> So, for instance, Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 46; F. C. Synge, *Hebrews and the Scriptures* (London: SPCK, 1959), 4. This questionable claim founders on the fact that, even if the value of Luke’s birth narrative for understanding Hebrews is granted, the angels in that account explicitly direct their praise toward God, not toward the baby Jesus (so, among others, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 56 n. 67; William R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* [WMANT 53; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1981], 23).

<sup>17</sup> The author’s interpretation depends, in Attridge’s words, on his driving “a wedge between the third and fourth clauses of the text. Being ‘less than the angels’ is now not the equivalent of being crowned with honor and glory, but is, rather, its antithesis” (*Hebrews*, 72). This interpretive strategy is partly facilitated by taking the adverbial phrase βραχύ τι as indicative of a temporal limitation on the lower human status relative to that of the angels (i.e., made “briefly” lower), rather than as indicative of the quality or degree of that lower status (i.e., made “slightly” lower). In the context of the MT, the adverb מְעַד most naturally implies the latter meaning. The Greek could also bear this sense. Three points, though, prove that the author of Hebrews takes the phrase temporally. First, an episodic meaning fits the larger, eschatologically oriented context of the argument in Heb 1–2. In 2:5, in particular, the writer states that in the world to come humanity will have dominion, not the angels (cf. 2:2, which implies some level of human subjection to

he was made *lower* (ἐλαττώω) than the angels (παρ' ἀγγέλους).<sup>18</sup> Only after this episode was he crowned with glory and honor (2:9). The latter statement evokes the references to the Son's assuming the heavenly throne in Heb 1. Thus, in light of 2:6–9 and the emphasis on the Son's royal elevation above the angels at the outset of the homily, it would be strange if the writer were claiming in 1:6 that God commanded the angels to worship the Son at the very point that he assumed mortality, a status lower than their own.<sup>19</sup> While the broader lexical evidence makes such a reading possible, its lack of coherence with the larger context counts against its plausibility in Heb 1:6.

### **2.3.1.2 The Parousia Interpretation**

As with the position just discussed, the argument that the author thinks of the Son's parousia also places a great deal of weight on the fact that the term οἰκουμένη usually refers to the realm of human habitation. One of the distinctive planks in the justification for this interpretation rests on the placement of the adverb πάλιν in 1:6. Adherents of this view typically note the author's inclusion of the adverb within the ὅταν

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angelic authority). The point seems to be that one of the characteristics of the world to come is that the present status of humanity vis-à-vis the angels is temporary and will be changed. Second, a temporal interpretation of βραχύ τι coheres with the author's use of temporal language when he begins explicating Ps 8 in 2:8c (i.e., νῦν δὲ οὐπω, on this point see, e.g., Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 154). Third, insofar as he applies this psalm to the particular situation of Jesus, the Son, there can be no doubt that he intends to highlight the limited duration of the Son's being lower than the angels. Not only is this implicit in the fact that the Son's time of suffering is a past episode in his life (he is now crowned with glory and honor, 2:9; cf. 9:26), it is also clearly implied in the author's repeated stress on the Son's present position *above* the angels throughout Heb 1.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Andriessen, "La Teneur," 294; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 27.

<sup>19</sup> Several adherents to this view note this problem (e.g., Andriessen, "La Teneur," 294; Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:77; Albert Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ: Épître aux Hébreux 1 et 2* [LD 58; Paris: Cerf, 1969], 155).

clause of 1:6. They accordingly suggest that the term modifies the verb εἰσάγω.<sup>20</sup> The author therefore refers to the Son's being brought *again* into the human realm. This reading has the merit of being the simplest at the level of syntax. Once again, however, the context creates difficulties.

As noted above, the author asserts in 1:5 that God has never addressed any angel by the name "Son." That is, the implied answer to the question in 1:5, "Did God ever say to any of the angels 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you?'" is, "No, God has never said such a thing to any of the angels." The contrastive δέ of 1:6 fits well with the oppositional logic of 1:5 insofar as the conjunction introduces evidence for what God *has* said to the angels—God commanded them to worship the Son.

God's command to the angels to worship the Son, therefore, corresponds to the author's comments about the Son's royal elevation in 1:3–4 (i.e., his act of sitting at God's right hand and being given a name above that of the angels, v. 4). Moreover, the theme of the Son attaining a status higher than that of the angels accords well with the command in 1:6 for the angels to worship him. All of this suggests that the Son's investiture with a status and name higher than that of any of the angels is the event that best corresponds with the divine command to the angels to worship the Son. For the author of Hebrews, in other words, the command to worship does not refer to a future time. It has already occurred.

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<sup>20</sup> E.g., Héring, *L'Épître*, 25; Michel, *Der Brief*, 112–13; Riggenbach, *Der Brief*, 19–20; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 22.

Such a conclusion raises the question of what the *πάλιν* in 1:6 modifies. It must be noted that even if *πάλιν* is taken as modifying *εἰσάγω*, the adverb need not connote the Son's parousia. If, as I argue below, the referent of *οἰκουμένη* were shown to be to the heavenly realm, then the mention of the Son's entering *again* into the *οἰκουμένη* would more likely indicate his ascension back into heaven rather than his future return to earth. Notably, an ascension interpretation better coheres with the larger context of Heb 1 where, as has been said, rather than stressing the *future* worship of the angels, the emphasis of the text rests squarely on the demonstration of the Son's *current* status as the one elevated above the angels. The author does affirm the Son's return (cf. 9:28), but the preceding discussion indicates that in spite of the stress that adherents of the parousia interpretation lay on the placement of *πάλιν* in 1:6, the real point at issue concerns the referent of *οἰκουμένη*. Nevertheless, before directly engaging the meaning of the term in this context, there are good grounds for concluding that the *πάλιν* of 1:6 does not modify *εἰσάγω*.

The writer consistently uses *πάλιν* and a coordinating conjunction as a means of stringing together related citations of Jewish scripture. In such contexts *πάλιν* modifies a prior usage of a form of *λέγω*. Excluding 1:6, five of the other nine occurrences of the adverb are clearly employed in this way (cf. 1:5; 2:13 [2x]; 4:5; 10:30). The four remaining instances of *πάλιν* place the adverb in collocation with verbs where no

citations of Jewish scripture are being introduced.<sup>21</sup> In light of this data and the fact that just prior to 1:6, as well as within 1:6, the author places citations of Jewish scripture in the mouth of God, the collocation of *πάλιν* and a conjunction in 1:6 more likely serves to introduce the scriptural quotation that follows the *ὅταν* clause than to modify the verb *εἰσάγω* within that clause.<sup>22</sup> The somewhat puzzling placement of *πάλιν* results simply from the adverb's close association with the conjunction, which happens in this instance to be the postpositive *δέ*.<sup>23</sup>

### ***2.3.1.3 The Exaltation Interpretation***

Other critiques of the two views sketched above can be found in the secondary literature,<sup>24</sup> but the foregoing discussion indicates that the assumption that *οἰκουμένη* in Heb 1:6 denotes the human earthly realm does not square well with the argument being made in the surrounding context. A more detailed exegesis of that context further demonstrates that those who identify the Son's entry into the *οἰκουμένη* with his exaltation and/or enthronement in the heavenly realm have more persuasive arguments.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See the three instances of the adverb in the parenetic material of 5:11–6:20 (viz. 5:12; 6:1, 6). See also 4:7 where the adverb indicates that God has again set a day to enter his rest.

<sup>22</sup> So, e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 55; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 56; Caneday, "The Eschatological World," 32–33.

<sup>23</sup> Meier ("Symmetry," 509) argues that the phrase *δὲ πάλιν* intentionally parallels the phrase *καὶ πάλιν* used in 1:5. The apparently strange placement of the *πάλιν* can therefore be explained by the simple fact that, in keeping with the *δέ*, the entire phrase is viewed as a unit and thus both its terms take the postpositive position. Meier, among others, also notes the analogous placement of *πάλιν* in Wis 14:1.

<sup>24</sup> See especially the succinct summaries and critiques of the various views by Loader (*Sohn*, 23–24). Loader's own proposal is a hybrid of positions two and three—Jesus' position above the angels begins with his exaltation but will only be made manifest to the entire world at his parousia (similarly Käsemann, *Gottesvolk*, 60–61). The primary flaw in Loader's view is that he assumes the validity of the technical meaning of *οἰκουμένη* in opposition to the heavenly realm. He is therefore compelled to include a reference to Jesus' return to earth in his solution.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., Andriessen, "La Teneur," 293–313; and, Idem, "De Betekenis van Hebr. 1,6" *Studia Catholica* 35 (1960): 2–13; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 57–58; J. H. Davies, *A Letter to Hebrews* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge



### 2.3.1.3.1 The “World to Come” as the *Οἰκουμένη* in Hebrews 1:6

In Heb 1:14 the writer describes the angels as ministering spirits sent to serve “those who are about to inherit salvation” (οἱ μέλλοντες κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν). At 2:1–4 he introduces the first of his trademark parenetic discourses. While this hortatory interlude is not unconnected from the larger themes of his argument,<sup>26</sup> it marks an exhortative digression from the central thrust of his case. This break in the argument of Heb 1 has led some to conclude that when in 2:5 the author transitions out of his parenthesis and into a discussion about the place of the angels relative to the “world to come,” he has begun a new section and discussion.<sup>27</sup> Such an understanding, if correct, would imply that the οἰκουμένη of 1:6 and 2:5 denote different entities.

Others, such as Harold Attridge, note further that the qualification of οἰκουμένη in 2:5 with the participial form of μέλλω probably indicates that the writer intends his

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University Press, 1967), 22–23; Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:77–78; ; Meier, “Symmetry,” 507–8; Schierse, *Verheissung und Heilsvollendung*, 93–97; Thompson, *Beginnings*, 132; Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (2d ed.; HNT 14; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), 15; Vanhoye, “L’οἰκουμένη,” 248–53.

<sup>26</sup> I discuss this in more detail below.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Koester, who thinks the macro structure of Hebrews is best understood in terms of the categories of classical rhetoric, argues that 1:1–2:4 represent the exordium of an ancient speech while 2:5–9 state its proposition (*Hebrews*, 213, 218–20; though see the mitigating comments of 200–1). James Swetnam similarly argues for a clear divide between 1:5–14 and 2:5–14, though on different grounds. He thinks the former section addresses the topic of the Son as fully divine, while the latter transition to the topic of the Son’s full humanity (“Form and Content in Hebrews 1–6,” *Bib* 53 (1972): 368–85, here 372–73). Parceling out the text into these more or less discrete units may, however, contribute to a misunderstanding of the flow of the logic. I argue below that, insofar as 2:5 is a transition, the case being made in Heb 2 functions as *the rationale* for the elevation of the Son above the angels in Heb 1. As such, the emphasis on Jesus’ humanity in Heb 2 does not introduce a change or shift in the focus of the argument (as if the author argues that Jesus is elevated above the angels because he is divine [Heb 1] and, in addition, that Jesus is elevated above the angels because he is human [Heb 2]). Rather, the justification for the claim in Heb 1 that the Son has been elevated above the angels is provided in Heb 2—the Son is Jesus, the *human being* who has been glorified.

auditors to draw a distinction between this coming οἰκουμένη and the one mentioned in 1:6.<sup>28</sup> Attridge concludes that, given the technical status of the language of “this world” and “the world to come” in early Jewish and later rabbinic literature, the unqualified reference to the world in 1:6 would be understood as a reference to the present earthly realm, while the οἰκουμένη to come in 2:5 would be taken as identifying the eschatological realm. This is a point of potential significance and I discuss it further below. Seven other contextual indicators, however, tell against such an interpretation. These seven factors suggest that, rather than identifying a different οἰκουμένη in 2:5, the author refers back in 2:5 to the οἰκουμένη mentioned in 1:6.

First, although the exhortation of 2:1–4 could be interpreted as signaling a transition away from the discussion of the Son and the angels that dominates chapter one,<sup>29</sup> the presence of motifs from that discussion within the parenetic interlude—e.g., the

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<sup>28</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 56. Attridge rightly challenges the overstated conclusions discussed above for a well defined, technical distinction between the terms οἰκουμένη as “heavenly world” and κόσμος as “inhabited human world.” Nevertheless, his claim that the warrants for taking οἰκουμένη in 1:6 as a reference to the realm of heaven “are weak” (56) is equally overstated. One need not suppose that οἰκουμένη bears the technical sense of “heavenly realm” in Hebrews to recognize that the writer consistently uses the term with reference to the realm where the exalted Son sits at God’s right hand and reigns. Moreover, the qualification of Heb 2:5 shows that the term can be applied to something other than its “most normal sense” of the “inhabited human world” (56).

<sup>29</sup> Scholars generally recognize that 2:5ff. continues to be related to the issue of the Son’s standing relative to the angels. This relationship is often thought to be correlated with the two-stage (i.e., humiliation-exaltation) priestly Christology of the letter. George H. Guthrie, for example, argues that in 2:5–9, “The common denominator between what precedes and what follows is the relationship of the Son to the angels. The author has already established the Son as higher than the angels (1:1–14). He now wishes to show, on the basis of Ps. 8:4–6, that it was necessary for the Son to become lower than the angels in order to accomplish man’s salvation and be glorified as high priest” (*The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* [NovTSup 73; Leiden: Brill, 1994], 109). Such an assessment is, in the broadest sense, correct. The Son’s becoming human results in atonement for humanity. What has apparently gone unnoticed, however, is that the discussion in 2:5–18 is not intended to serve as a contrast to the exaltation of the Son over the angels in Heb 1. The point is not that in Heb 1 the Son is shown to be exalted over the angels, while in Heb 2 he is shown to be made lower than the angels. Rather, the discussion of the Son’s becoming

angels (2:2) and salvation (2:3; cf. 1:14)—suggests that the interlude does not represent a definitive transition away from the main concerns of the first chapter.<sup>30</sup> Of particular interest is the author’s qualification of the term *salvation* with the adjective τηλικούτος. The adjective draws the reader’s attention back to the previous mention of salvation in 1:14. Thus, the salvation the writer says is “such a great” one is none other than the salvation just depicted in 1:14 as that about to be inherited.

Second, clear evidence from other parts of the homily proves that this author can interrupt a line of argumentation with a pointed parenetic interlude only to pick up the thread of the argument again at a later point. In 5:11–6:19, for example, he deviates from his discussion of the mention of Melchizedek in Ps 110:4 with an extended section of parenthesis. In 6:20, however, he returns to the very point with which he left off in 5:10. He then proceeds in Heb 7 to develop in great detail the argument suspended in 5:10. That he

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human in Heb 2 explains how and why the Son has become so much greater than the angels. Not all interpreters miss this. One example is George B. Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *CJT* 5 (1959): 44–51. Caird insightfully states that Ps 8 “is quoted only at 2:6–8, but it controls the argument of the preceding chapter, for from the first mention of angels at 1:5 throughout the formidable catena of texts in ch. 1 the author’s one aim is to illustrate the theme of the psalm that man has been destined by God to a glory excelling that of the angels and that this destiny has been achieved by Christ ... who came to lead many sons into their destined glory” (49). His student, L. D. Hurst, picks up on this insight noting, “It is only when an appreciation of the meaning and significance of Ps. 8 in chapter two is developed that one is in a position to understand the argument of chapter one” (“Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2,” 154). Similarly Albert Vanhoye argued that 2:5ff. continues the argument of Heb 1 (*Situation*, 255). He also placed more emphasis than most do on the significance of the Son’s humanity as a criterion for his elevation above the angels (290–1, 390). Notably H. von Soden claimed that 2:5 “ist nicht ein neuer Gedanke, sondern Recapitulation von 1,4–14 in negativer Fassung, speziell parallel mit 1,14 und anschliessend an 1,13, eine Antwort auf die rhetorischen Fragen 1,5 und 13” (*Hebräerbrief, Briefe des Petrus, Jakobus, Judas* [3d ed.; Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament 3; Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr, 1899], 27).

<sup>30</sup> See Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:112; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 89.

might be returning in 2:5 to the topic he deviated from in 1:13–14—the contrast between the Son and the angels—is therefore possible.

Third, the occurrences of a form of μέλλω and references to the angels in both 1:14 and 2:5 suggest not only that the larger issue broken off at 1:14 is being picked up again in 2:5,<sup>31</sup> but also that the salvation “about to” be inherited in 1:14 (the “such a great salvation” of 2:3), and the “coming” οἰκουμένη in 2:5 are parallel ways of referring to the same basic idea.<sup>32</sup> The salvation about to be inherited by those whom the angels serve is therefore linked to the οἰκουμένη to come.

Fourth, evidence from later in the sermon suggests that the mention in 2:4 of signs, wonders, various powers (ποικίλαι δυνάμεις), and the presence of the Holy Spirit are elements indicative of the eschatological realm for this author. In 6:4–5 he refers to those who have become partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age (δυνάμεις ... μέλλοντος αἰῶνος). Thus, in all likelihood, his reference to wonders, powers, and the Holy Spirit in 2:4 already marks the transition from his parenthesis back to the topics of the eschatological inheritance, the angels, and the Son mentioned in 1:13–14 (cf. 1:2–4). These things are realities because the writer believes these are the last days and the Son is sitting at God’s right hand. When, therefore, he uses the inferential conjunction γάρ in 2:5 to introduce the idea that

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<sup>31</sup> So Koester, *Hebrews*, 213; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 45.

<sup>32</sup> See Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:112.

the world to come is *not* subjected to the angels, he likely signals that he is returning to his explication of the very issues he was addressing throughout Heb 1.<sup>33</sup>

Fifth, the idea that the world to come is not subjected to the angels implicitly relates to the central contrast of Heb 1 between the Son and angels. In 1:13–14 the greater status of the Son is illustrated in that he was invited to sit at God’s right hand while the angels remain ministering spirits sent to aid the ones about to inherit salvation. While this could be interpreted in terms of the angels holding a lower status than those they are sent to aid, the author’s discussion militates against such a conclusion. In 2:2 the angels are described as being invested with real authority—the word they spoke in the past was binding. By way of contrast, the great salvation about to be inherited—i.e., the world to come—is not subjected to the angels. Such language recalls the earlier comment of 1:1–2 that in these last days God has spoken by means of a Son whom he has appointed *heir* of all things. Moreover, the notion of the coming world not being subjected to the angels accords well with the elevation of the Son to a position, specifically a throne, above that of the angels.

Sixth, as was noted above, 2:7 and 9 imply that the Son’s incarnation corresponds to his being lowered below the angels. Here I reiterate that if the Son’s becoming human entails that he, like all other humans, was made for a short while lower than the angels, the idea that the angels are commanded to worship him at the very moment that he is placed below them is strange. It makes more sense to assume that the angels offer their

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<sup>33</sup> Contra Attridge, who finds the transition of 2:5 to be “abrupt” (*Hebrews*, 69). I would further point out that these details suggest that the parenetic interlude was in fact constructed with a view to the themes in the very argument it interrupts.

worship to the Son at the moment of his elevation to a status above their own than to locate their submissive posture to a time when the Son was lowered to a status below them.

Seventh, when the writer comments in 2:5 that the οἰκουμένη to come is the topic about which he is speaking (περὶ ἧς λαλοῦμεν), the most plausible interpretation, especially in light of the six points noted above, is that he intends to direct his audience's attention *back* to the argument he was making prior to his parenetic interlude of 2:1–4.<sup>34</sup> That is to say, in the clause περὶ ἧς λαλοῦμεν, the prepositional phrase is almost certainly anaphoric.<sup>35</sup> It therefore signals the auditors to think back to the larger discussion of Heb 1, and specifically to recall the reference in 1:6 to the Son's entry into the οἰκουμένη. At the same time, however, 2:5 moves the discussion forward by clarifying that the οἰκουμένη the Son entered and in which he has attained a status higher than that of any of the angels is none other than the salvation of the coming inheritance promised to them (1:14).

When taken together these seven contextual observations suggest that the οἰκουμένη the Son is said in 1:6 to have entered and where the angels worship him is the same as the οἰκουμένη to come in 2:5. It is, therefore, also the very realm of the

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<sup>34</sup> Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:114; Koester, *Hebrews*, 213; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 45.

<sup>35</sup> Contra Craig L. Blomberg, “‘But We See Jesus’: The Relationship between the Son of Man in Hebrews 2:6 and 2:9 and the Implications for English Translations,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (ed. Richard Bauckham, et al; LNTS 387; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 88–99, here 93. Blomberg argues that the feminine relative pronoun ἧς refers only to the word οἰκουμένη in 2:5 (and thus only to the “world to come”) and not to the discussion of the larger context of Heb 1 (which Blomberg thinks would require a neuter pronoun). The term οἰκουμένη itself, however, points the reader back to the argument of the broader context.

inheritance promised to those who are about to be saved. Since the Son is elevated to the throne at God's right hand in the heavenly realm, the very realm in which the angels dwell, the inference naturally follows that the οἰκουμένη that the author speaks about is none other than the heavenly realm. The exaltation interpretation of 1:6 therefore fits better in the larger context of Heb 1 and 2 than do the other approaches. I now examine the basic interpretative positions espoused by some of the main proponents of the exaltation interpretation of 1:6.

### ***2.3.1.3.2 The Οἰκουμένη as the "World" of the Son's Exaltation***

Albert Vanhoye, one of the main proponents of the exaltation view, points out that in Heb 12:26–27, “l’auteur distingue deux plans de réalité τὰ σαλευόμενα et τὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα.”<sup>36</sup> He goes on to add, “Leur identification n’est pas difficile; il s’agit du monde présent, périssable, et des réalités eschatologiques, définitives.”<sup>37</sup> Vanhoye further notes that the language of God “shaking” (ἐγὼ σείσω) the earth and the heaven used in Heb 12:26 is curiously different from that of the shakable and unshakable things referenced in 12:27 (τὰ σαλεύόμενα). In keeping with the marginal note in the Nestle-Aland text, he concludes that the statement of 12:26 likely derives from Hag 2:6 where God promises that he will reign and bless the rebuilding of the temple with glory greater than that of its original state by shaking (ἐγὼ σείσω) the heavens, the earth, the sea, the dry land, and all the nations such that they will bring their treasures to Jerusalem. This collocation of the motifs of God's reign, the restoration of the temple, and the world

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<sup>36</sup> Vanhoye, “L’οἰκουμένη,” 250.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 250–51.

being shaken also occurs in LXX Ps 95. Under the rubric of a superscription linking the psalm to the reconstruction of the temple, the Greek translation speaks of the Lord reigning (v. 10), the earth (γῆ) being shaken (v. 9), and the οἰκουμένη being unshakable (v. 10).

The thematic congruence between Haggai and LXX Ps 95 leads Vanhoye to assert, “Sur les choses qui s’ébranlent l’oracle d’Aggée est plus complet que le psaume; il parle de tout le cosmos, ciel, terre, mer. ... Mais sur les choses qui ne s’ébranlent pas, c’est le psaume qui nous éclaire: ce qui ne s’ébranle pas, c’est l’*oikouménè* érigée par le Seigneur pour sa prise de pouvoir.”<sup>38</sup> I discuss LXX Ps 95 and other Septuagintal uses of οἰκουμένη in detail below.<sup>39</sup> For now, it is important to recognize that Vanhoye claims, with very little argument, that the discussions of Hag 2:6 and LXX Ps 95 concerning what can and cannot be shaken are mutually informative. When taken together these two texts, he claims, clarify the content of eschatological claims that distinguish between the present reality and God’s coming reality. Specifically, the shakable things are the elements of the κόσμος, while the unshakable realm is that of the οἰκουμένη. If one admits these points, it follows that in Hebrews, “l’interprétation obvie est que l’*oikouménè* désigne ici l’éon à venir, la réalité eschatologique. Cette réalité est mise en place lors de l’exaltation du Christ dont le lecteur chrétien reconnaît l’annonce dans l’aoriste ingressif ὁ [sic] Κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν, le Seigneur a pris le pouvoir, il a inauguré

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>39</sup> See section 2.4.1.2.



son règne.”<sup>40</sup> Vanhoye therefore identifies the οἰκουμένη of Heb 1:6 with God’s unshakable eschatological reality and argues that the verse depicts Jesus’ entry into that realm where he was exalted to royal status.

Vanhoye states further that this eschatological understanding of οἰκουμένη enables one to see that the writer of Hebrews intentionally contrasts the terms οἰκουμένη and κόσμος. In his words, “*Kosmos* désigne le monde visible, matériel; *oikouménè* évoque une réalité spirituelle, le monde des relations entre personnes.”<sup>41</sup> He goes on to claim that Hebrews “était moins tenté que personne de concevoir la réalité eschatologique d’une manière matérielle. Il la concevait bien plutôt comme une communauté spirituelle où les croyant sont en relation avec les saints, avec les anges, et où par Jésus ils ont libre accès jusqu’à Dieu.”<sup>42</sup> Jesus’ entry into the οἰκουμένη therefore marks the point at which he passed out of the present material realm and crossed over into the spiritual, eschatological age, opening the way for believers to be brought into relationship with the larger spiritual community of saints, angels, and ultimately God.

Given this understanding of οἰκουμένη as a spiritual and relational realm, he concludes, “Il faut donc se garder de confondre l’entrée du Christ dans le *kosmos* (10,5) et son introduction dans l’*oikouménè* (1,6). La première est humiliation au-dessous des anges (2,7.9), la seconde est exaltation au-dessus d’eux (1,4–6).”<sup>43</sup> Thus Vanhoye proposes a technical distinction in Hebrews between the terms οἰκουμένη and κόσμος.

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<sup>40</sup> Vanhoye, “L’οἰκουμένη,” 251.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

The former denotes the spiritual realm where believers come into close relationship with God, while the latter refers to the world of earthly matter—a realm where people cannot come into God’s presence. Jesus’ entry into the οἰκουμένη in 1:6 occurred when he ascended out of the material world of his humiliation and into God’s heavenly economy. In that heavenly οἰκουμένη, having been appointed the royal Son and exalted above the angels, he has become the object of angelic worship.

The apparent ease with which this assessment of the situation can be made to conform with a Middle Platonic cosmology has led other advocates of this exaltation interpretation to endorse Vanhoye’s proposal of a technical distinction in Hebrews between οἰκουμένη and κόσμος. Thus, for example, John P. Meier claims:

In Hebrews, *oikoumenē* does not mean this empirical, visible, inhabited world of ours, as general and NT Greek usage would lead us to expect. Rather, the “humane”, “civilized” sense inherent in *oikoumenē* and its use in the LXX lead our middle-platonic author to apply it to the true world, where the holy assembly lives. . . . This is the ‘upper’, heavenly world, the *oikoumenē* which, from the perspective of those on this earth, is still to come. . . . By contrast, when our author speaks of the preexistent Son coming into this empirical world of ours he uses *kosmos*.<sup>44</sup>

While this is admittedly a strange and uncommon use of οἰκουμένη, these scholars propose that the author of Hebrews employed the word in order to stress a dichotomy between the created material realm, which he consistently refers to as the κόσμος, and the spiritual, heavenly realm, which he consistently refers to as the οἰκουμένη.

This is not the only way of understanding οἰκουμένη in 1:6 as the realm of Jesus’ exaltation. In a commentary and a pair of articles, P. C. B. Andriessen articulates a case

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<sup>44</sup> Meier, “Symmetry,” 507. Similarly see Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:79.

for the importance of the exodus story for the argument of the first few chapters of Hebrews. In particular, he emphasizes that the scriptural citation of Heb 1:6 derives from the Song of Moses in Deut 32:43.<sup>45</sup> In his view the author drew upon the theme of Israel entering Canaan after the period of wandering found in the larger context of Deut 32:43.

Noting, among other points,<sup>46</sup> that the participial form of οἰκέω (i.e., οἰκουμένη) is used as an adjective to describe Canaan in Exod 16:35 as an “inhabited land,” he argues that the author of Hebrews picks up the term οἰκουμένη and uses it to refer to the true promised land—the heavenly realm that Jesus has entered.<sup>47</sup> In his words, the use of οἰκουμένη for the heavenly realm makes sense

wanneer men deze term tenminste neemt in zijn oorspronkelijke betekenis van bewoond land. ... Het staat dan tegenover onbewoond land of woestijn. Het beloofde land deed zich aan de Joden die 40 jaren door de woestijn getrokken hadden voor als het bewoonde land, als οἰκουμένη. Evenzo is in de gedachtegang van de auteur van Hb. deze aarde een woestijn, die men haastig moet doortrekken om het land der belofte te bereiken.<sup>48</sup>

In an article published sixteen years later he further explains that such an interpretation of Heb 1:6,

[E]st entièrement dans la ligne caractéristique de l’Épître qui confronte constamment les deux phases de l’histoire du salut pour présenter le mystère du Christ à la fois comme prolongeant et comme dépassant les grands événements de l’histoire d’Israël au temps de Moïse. Celui-ci, de même qu’il a prévu un nouvel

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<sup>45</sup> Andriessen, “La Teneur,” 295. I discuss the citation and its source in greater detail below.

<sup>46</sup> He also points out, for example, that in Exod 4:22 God refers to Israel as υἱὸς πρωτότοκός μου.

<sup>47</sup> Andriessen, “La Teneur,” 299.

<sup>48</sup> The application of οἰκουμένη to the heavenly realm only makes sense, that is, “when one takes this term in its original sense of ‘inhabited country.’ ... It is therefore to be contrasted with ‘uninhabited country’ or ‘desert wastes.’ The land was promised to the Jews, who wandered for 40 years through the desert wastes, as an inhabited country, that is, as an οἰκουμένη. In the same way this earth is, in the mind of the author of Hb., a wasteland which one must quickly pass through in order to reach the land that was promised,” Andriessen, “De Betekenis, 13. See also, P. Andriessen and A. Lenglet, *De Brief Aan De Hebreëen* (Het Nieuwe Testament; Roermond: J. J. Romen & Zonen, 1971), 46–47.

Exode, une seconde et définitive libération, de même il a prédit une seconde entrée dans la terre promise.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, for Andriessen the οἰκουμένη mentioned in Heb 1:6 is heavenly in nature. His focus on the exodus story, however, allows him to reach this conclusion without having to suppose that the author has used the words οἰκουμένη and κόσμος as technical terms indicative of a dualism between the spiritual and the material realms. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of the contrast between Israel's wandering in a desert waste for forty years, and their entry into the inhabited (and so inhabitable) land of Canaan. When this account is read through an eschatological lens, it is reasonable to think that someone like the author of Hebrews could come to view the present world as the desert realm while looking to the coming world as the true inheritance God intended for his people.

In a similar vein, Franz Schierse focuses on the importance of the writer's eschatology for understanding how he conceived of the οἰκουμένη in 1:6. After critiquing the incarnation and parousia views, Schierse concludes that οἰκουμένη denotes the heavenly realm in Hebrews. He notes that throughout the homily the author reconceptualizes some of the central elements of Jewish faith and practice in terms of an invisible, eschatological afterlife (*Jenseits*).<sup>50</sup> Thus the writer speaks of a heavenly tabernacle (8:5), city (12:10), and homeland (12:16). In his words, "Die gedankliche Einheit des Briefes ist eine vollständige. Um ihn zu verstehen, muß man den Schlüssel

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<sup>49</sup> Andriessen, "La Teneur," 300.

<sup>50</sup> Schierse, *Verheissung*, 96.

kennen, mit dem die sichtbaren Dinge transponiert worden sind.”<sup>51</sup> It therefore follows for Schierse, as for Andriessen, that when the writer speaks of the οἰκουμένη, the concept of “an inhabitable realm” continues to be present in the term. The key for him is that, in keeping with the unified eschatological vision of the text, this realm is also to be identified as the heavenly world to come.

Importantly, though, Schierse thinks the “antikosmisch-eschatologische Dualismus”<sup>52</sup> must be understood in the following terms: “Die Welt der Heilsvollendung ist für den Hb eine himmlisch-unsichtbare, Gott zugehörige *Schöpfung*.” Once this is recognized, “Dann werden die verschiedenen *eschatologischen* Vorstellungen— zukünftige Welt, Haus Gottes, Gottesruhe, himmlisches Vaterland, Himmelstadt— behandelt, in denen die Stellung des Menschen zur himmlischen Welt eine wichtige Rolle spielt.”<sup>53</sup>

In Schierse’s opinion, one of the central claims of the author’s eschatological vision is that human beings will one day obtain a place in heaven. Specifically, salvation is the transfer of humanity out of this world and into the heavenly world created for us by God. This does not mean, however, that this is simply a transfer into the spiritual realm or that the heavenly world presupposes a dualism that pits spirit against a flesh-and-blood body. The coming world, “ist kein unirdisches Geisterreich, sondern für die Menschen und ihre Lebensgüter bestimmt. ... Obgleich sie mit dem Himmel identisch ist (1,6),

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 9 (emphasis added).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. (emphasis original).

haben die Engel in ihr keine selbständige Bedeutung.”<sup>54</sup> Neither, however, is the coming world to be understood as a renewal of the present world.<sup>55</sup> The coming world is a heavenly creation and so invisible and eternal. It becomes fully available to God’s people only by way of the final destruction of the visible world. His solution is to suggest that the final human state involves a transfer of the human spirit out of the body of flesh (Sarx-Leib/Fleischesleib) into a body fit to exist in the heavenly world—a heavenly body (Himmelsleib).<sup>56</sup> The necessary unity between “irdischer und himmlischer Leiblichkeit,” as also between the earthly οἰκουμένη and the heavenly one, consists in the fundamental relationship between the original (Urbild) and the copy (Abbild).<sup>57</sup>

### ***2.3.2 Summary: Spiritual or Heavenly Exaltation?***

Having demonstrated the likelihood that, given the larger context, the οἰκουμένη mentioned in 1:6 and that mentioned in 2:5 are one and the same entity (both refer to the coming eschatological realm in which God’s promises will find ultimate fulfillment), it follows that the depiction of the Son being worshiped by the angels should be taken as occurring when the Son entered the realm where God dwells. The survey presented of the various representatives of this basic view demonstrates a fundamental divide regarding the nature of this coming realm. Vanhoye argues that the essential distinction between this world and the next should be understood in terms of a dichotomy between the material and spiritual realms. Jesus’ entry into heaven marked his departure from the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 99, 164.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 163–64.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 164.

created realm of matter and entry into the eternal realm of spiritual realities. The arguments of Schierse and, to some extent, those of Andriessen present a more nuanced view. The author of Hebrews, especially in Schierse's interpretation, seeks not to underwrite a body/spirit dualism, but to emphasize the fittingness of the heavenly realm for human habitation in light of Jesus' work. In other words, the heart of the debate centers on what the nature of the eschatological world will be. Will it be a release of the spirit from the world of earthly matter into the realm of spirits, or will it involve some kind of transfer such that human beings will continue to have human bodies, but will nonetheless be fully able to dwell in God's presence? One must also ask whether the kind of divide between transformation and transfer posited by Schierse is ultimately an accurate way to conceive of the coming world.

Any assessment of the views just detailed regarding the significance of the conclusion that Jesus has been exalted to and within the hoped-for eschatological realm must be made in light of other ancient texts in which this same essential hope finds clear expression, and so now I turn to a survey of Second Temple literature. This exercise not only provides support for the plausibility of interpreting the οἰκουμένη in 1:6 and 2:5 as the same entity, it also clarifies the possible meaning and fit of the term within the logic of the argument of Heb 1–2.

#### *2.4 Defining the Οἰκουμένη*

The investigation that follows has two foci. First, while the overwhelming majority of occurrences of the term οἰκουμένη in Septuagintal contexts use the word with reference to the inhabited parts of the earth, a handful of instances attest meanings that do

not square with the word's most common denotation. I highlight these examples and analyze them in their Greek contexts to see if they provide some guidance for how the term might function in a context like Hebrews where the earthly realm does not appear to be the term's primary referent. Second, I discuss several of the references to a coming age or world in Second Temple literature in order to establish an historical understanding of what this language would likely entail for an author like the one who wrote Hebrews.

In light of this contextual evidence, I argue that, while Vanhoye rightly perceived that οἰκουμένη in Hebrews has a heavenly referent, he wrongly interpreted this along the lines of a spirit/material dualism. That is to say, the views posited by Andriessen and Schierse that the world to come is a world fit for human habitation more adequately grasp the eschatological nuance of Hebrews' argument than does the dualism of Vanhoye and others. I argue further that the sharp divide between these two realms as posited by Schierse is not the best explanation of their relationship to each other.

#### ***2.4.1 Οἰκουμένη as "Heaven," "Temple," and "Promised Land" in the Greek Psalter***

While the majority of the occurrences of οἰκουμένη in Septuagintal texts support the word's use to denote parts of the earth that are inhabited by people, Vanhoye identifies a handful of instances that appear to employ the term with reference to heaven. He does not, however, provide an especially detailed examination of the contexts of these occurrences of οἰκουμένη.<sup>58</sup> In what follows, I turn to this task with a view to bringing

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<sup>58</sup> In addition to this point it is worth noting that another potential problem with Vanhoye's position is that several of his examples do not obviously support the kind of distinction he argues for between the earth and the οἰκουμένη unless one first assumes the technical distinction for which he is arguing. This is the case,



greater clarity to the biblical resonances the term οἰκουμένη might have held for the author of Hebrews. Of particular interest are a handful of instances where the word occurs in certain psalms that 1) could easily be read within an eschatological frame, 2) seem to distinguish the οἰκουμένη from the earth, and 3) whose contents often have to do with motifs important to the author of Hebrews. A study of these texts allows two conclusions. First, as Vanhoye suggested, the word οἰκουμένη was not strictly limited to the earthly realms and could be used with reference to the heavenly realm. Second, however, the contexts of the word's usages in these texts do not demand the kind of technical dualistic distinction between a shakable, material, earthly realm and an unshakable, spiritual, heavenly realm that Vanhoye and others argue the term carries in Hebrews.<sup>59</sup>

#### **2.4.1.1 LXX Psalm 96**

LXX Ps 96:4 states, ἔφραναν αἱ ἀστραπαὶ αὐτοῦ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ, εἶδεν καὶ ἐσαλεύθη ἡ γῆ (“His lightning appeared to the οἰκουμένη, the earth saw and was shaken”).<sup>60</sup> On its own terms, the two strophes of v. 4 are parallel. The earth and the οἰκουμένη appear to be the same thing. Yet, the occurrences of οἰκουμένη in LXX Pss

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for example, in LXX Ps 23:1, 88:12, and 89:2. Each of these verses speaks of the earth (γῆ) and the οἰκουμένη, but in each case the terms seem most naturally to be synonyms. Vanhoye is not unaware of this problem. He writes, “Certes cette distinction ne sera pas au goût des commentateurs modernes, qui parleront, à juste titre, de parallélisme synonymique” (“L’οἰκουμένη,” 252). He nevertheless suggests that first century readers would be more likely to recognize a distinction between the earth and the οἰκουμένη than modern commentators are. These examples, though, do not advance his argument.

<sup>59</sup> See also, e.g., Johnson, *Hebrews*, 79; Thompson, *Beginnings*, 132, cf. 106–9.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. LXX Ps 76:19.

92:1 and 95:10, that is, in the near context of LXX Ps 96, suggest that a careful reader of the Psalter, particularly one with eschatological convictions, could read these strophes as referring to two different realms—the οἰκουμένη and the earth.

While I discuss both verses in detail below, I note here that LXX Ps 92:1 and 95:10 refer to the οἰκουμένη as something that will *not* be shaken (οὐ σαλευθήσεται). Moreover, in LXX Ps 95:10, the unshakable οἰκουμένη is contrasted with the shakable earth (ἡ γῆ, 95:9). These depictions of the οἰκουμένη as unshakable, and the contrast with the shakable earth make it plausible to imagine an ancient reader interpreting οἰκουμένη as referring to heaven—the realm where God dwells and reigns. The mention of God’s throne in LXX Ps 92:2 supports this supposition. On this reading, the lightning in LXX Ps 96:4 appears to the unshakable world (the heavenly realms), but the earth also sees it and shakes.<sup>61</sup>

With this possibility in mind, the superscription at the head of the psalm connecting it with the establishment of David’s kingdom takes on added significance.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Interestingly, lightning around God’s throne in heaven is a prominent feature in apocalyptic visions (e.g., *I Enoch* 14:17; *Rev* 4:5). The Seer of Revelation, who mentions thunder and lightning around God’s throne (4:5), also links these phenomena with God’s heavenly temple and a corresponding earthquake (see *Rev* 11:19).

<sup>62</sup> Neither the MT nor the Vulgate contain the superscription. The text of Ps 97:1 is not attested in the fragments of the psalms found at Qumran. Albert Pietersma argues compellingly that this and most of the other psalm superscriptions are exegetical additions peculiar to the Greek Psalter (“Exegesis and Liturgy in the Superscriptions of the Greek Psalter,” in *X Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* [ed. Bernard A. Taylor; SBLSCS 51; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001], 99–138). In keeping with this conclusion, several of the MSS associated with the Lucianic recension insert the following comment after the superscription of LXX Ps 96: ἀνεπίγραφος παρ’ ἑβραίοις. This datum, along with the Vulgate, proves that a proto-MT text lacking the superscription was in circulation. It is curious, though, that a comparison of the Göttingen edition of LXX Ps 96 and the MT suggests that the translator closely followed a *Vorlage* of Ps 97 virtually indistinguishable from the MT (there is a minor difference of word order in v. 5, in v. 9 the MT has a verbless clause while the verb εἶ is explicit in the

The clause reads: τῶ Δαυιδ, ὅτε ἡ γῆ αὐτοῦ καθίσταται (“For David, when his land is founded”). In all likelihood the superscription attempts to link the text of the psalm with the accession of David to the throne of Israel.<sup>63</sup> Yet, while the superscription may in the first instance point back to an important moment in the biblical story of Israel, the content of the rest of the psalm could easily foster an eschatological interpretation of David’s assumption of the throne. For example, the mention of the Lord’s reign (vv. 1, 9), the physical portents in heaven (clouds, darkness, fire, glory; vv. 2–3, 6) and on earth (shaking, mountains melting; vv. 4–5), and the dawning of light and joy for the righteous (vv. 11–12) appear well suited for an eschatological interpretation, particularly by someone already inclined to read other psalms in a messianic and eschatological frame.<sup>64</sup> It is not hard to imagine some Jews of the Second Temple period reading LXX Ps 96 in light of David’s coronation and looking ahead to the time when the Davidic ruler would finally and forever be established on the throne God promised David.

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Greek, LXX v. 10 contains a κύριος with no counterpart in the MT; and, while the MT reads כל־אלהים in vv. 7 and 9, the Greek of v. 7 reads πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ, while that of v. 9 reads πάντας τοὺς θεούς). This close correspondence between the Greek version and the MT raises the question as to why the translator, who is apparently so careful with the rest of the psalm, would have added a superscription, rather than translated one present in his *Vorlage*. Moreover, the fact that the 5<sup>th</sup> Century Freer MS 1219 has a slightly different superscription (following the ὅτε it reads: κατωκισθῆ ἡ γῆ) might suggest that it attests a variant translation tradition of a Hebrew *Vorlage* very similar to that underlying the translation printed in the Göttingen edition. Nevertheless, apart from new evidence and a fully critical edition of the LXX Psalms, a definite decision on the matter remains a desideratum.

<sup>63</sup> Pietersma suggests 2 Sam 5:1–6 as a possible text summoned up by the superscription (Ibid., 105).

<sup>64</sup> The phrase εἰς τὸ τέλος in the superscription would almost certainly prompt an association of the psalm with the end times (see, e.g., Martin Rösel, “Die Psalmüberschriften des Septuaginta-Psalter,” in *Der Septuaginta Psalter: Sprachliche und theologische Aspekte* [ed. Erich Zenger; Herders Biblische Studien 32; Freiburg: Herder, 2001], 125–48, here 137–39; Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992], 177–78).

Absolute certainty regarding the presence of this superscription in the text of the psalm known to the author of Hebrews cannot be established. It is noteworthy, however, that his citation of LXX Ps 96:7 in Heb 1:6<sup>65</sup> occurs in a context that comports well with a tradition linking the psalm to the fulfillment of God’s promise of a kingdom to David. From the very beginning of the homily, the application of the title “Son” to Jesus has connoted royalty. In the first few verses the author collocates Jesus’ status as Son with his position as “heir of all things” (1:2) and as the ruler seated at the right hand of the Most High (1:3, see also the citation of Ps 2:7).<sup>66</sup> His appeal to Ps 45 (1:8–9) to highlight the Son’s enduring throne, scepter, and anointing further confirms the point. The description of Jesus as the Son in Heb 1 most likely functions, therefore, as an affirmation that he is the “anointed one” (ὁ Χριστός, cf. 5:5)—the royal, Davidic Messiah to whom was promised the enduring throne at God’s right hand. Notably too, the author plainly affirms that Jesus belongs to the tribe of Judah (7:14), the tribe from which David came and from

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<sup>65</sup> A fair amount of debate exists regarding the source of this biblical allusion. Many scholars opt for Deut 32:43 as the source (see the brief discussion and survey in Susan E. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation* [WUNT 2/260; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009], 133–34; see also David M. Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews: A Study in Narrative Re-Presentation* [WUNT 2/238; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], who proves decisively the importance of Deuteronomy, and esp. Deut 32, for Hebrews in general). I here focus on LXX 96:7, which, as I have pointed out, contains several motifs that resonate with the concerns of the writer. Notably, too, he obviously knows LXX Ps 94 (cf. Heb 3:7–4:10). I suspect, however, that a dichotomous approach to this question is misguided. The obvious familiarity with the biblical text the author of Hebrews exhibits and the presence of themes evident in his homily and in Deut 32 (e.g., Moses is the original speaker [cf. Heb 3:1–6], there is a reference to angelic dominion [Deut 32:8; cf. Heb 2:2], the setting is just prior to Israel’s entry into the promised land [a theme that dovetails with the superscription of LXX Ps 96], the motif of atonement is present [LXX Deut 32:43]) suggest that it may be a mistake to limit the writer’s allusion to LXX Ps 96:7 or to Deut 32:43. I discuss the influence of the allusion to Deut 32 in Heb 1–2 in section 2.5.1.

<sup>66</sup> Loader, *Sohn*, 7–10, presents a brief and compact discussion of the evidence for messianic interpretations of Ps 2:7 in Second Temple Jewish literature.

which many Jews in the first century C.E. believed an heir of David would arise to sit upon the messianic throne.<sup>67</sup>

Given these considerations, the reference to the establishment of David's kingdom in the superscription of LXX Ps 96 is striking. The notion that the writer of Hebrews reads this psalm in terms of the restoration of David's rule seems probable. Moreover, the mention of the royal Son's entry into the οἰκουμένη where God commands the angels to worship him could plausibly be an eschatological interpretation of LXX Ps 96:7b in which the royal Son finally obtains the fullness of the Davidic kingdom, now shown to be the elevation to the *heavenly* throne at God's right hand. The οἰκουμένη of Heb 1:6, in keeping with the possibility argued above that the term could be read as denoting the heavens in LXX 96:4, could then be recognized as the enduring realm promised to David. This suggestion would further imply that the author of Hebrews identifies the heavenly realm as the ultimate fullness of God's promise to establish the Davidic kingdom. It is worth noting that if the οἰκουμένη in Heb 1:6 is a reference to the heavenly realm, this identification makes the presence of angels in that realm completely natural. Angels dwell in heaven.

#### **2.4.1.2 LXX Psalm 95**

As was noted, the basic interpretation just proposed—that the οἰκουμένη in Hebrews could reasonably be taken to denote the enduring heavenly realm—gains

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<sup>67</sup> See, e.g., Isa 11:1; Jer 23:5; Mic 5:1; *T. Jud.* 17:6; 21:2; 24:1–6. This idea is also prominent in the Qumran literature (John J. Collins, *The Scepter and Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* [ABRL 10; New York: Doubleday, 1995], esp. 56–68).

support from two other psalms in the near context of LXX Ps 96 that refer to an unshakable οἰκουμένη. The translations of these psalms also link them with superscriptions that correlate with concerns central to some Jewish eschatological hopes: the reestablishment of the temple and the possession of the promised land.

In the LXX translation of Ps 95:9 the psalmist states, “Worship the Lord in his holy courtyard (ἐν αὐλῇ ἁγία αὐτοῦ),<sup>68</sup> be shaken (σαλευθήτω) before his presence all the earth.” Verse 10 reads: εἶπατε ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν Ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν, καὶ γὰρ κατώρθωσεν τὴν οἰκουμένην, ἥτις οὐ σαλευθήσεται, κρινεῖ λαοὺς ἐν εὐθύτητι (“Say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns,’ for even he has set up the οἰκουμένη, it will not be shaken. He will judge the peoples rightly”). The psalm continues in v. 11 with a command to the heavens and the earth to rejoice over the declaration of v. 10 and an exhortation to the sea and its fullness to be shaken (σαλευθήτω). Thus, as with LXX Ps 96, one could plausibly interpret LXX 95:9–11 as implying an unshakable οἰκουμένη that stands in contrast to the shakable earthly realm (consisting in v. 11 of the heavens, the earth, and the seas). This unshakable realm is where the Lord reigns and, in the context of the psalm, is most naturally to be identified with God’s “holy courtyard” mentioned in v. 9.

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<sup>68</sup> The Greek phrase differs significantly from that of the MT in 96:9 which reads: שְׁבַח־תְּהִלָּתְךָ. One might have expected תְּהִלָּתְךָ to be translated with κάλλος (e.g., Deut 33:17) or δόξα (e.g., Isa 53:2). Nevertheless, the translator’s *Vorlage* undoubtedly contained the same phrase as that of the MT. This can be deduced from the fact that the two other instances of this same Hebrew phrase in the MT correspond to the only other instances of this Greek idiom in the Greek Bible (cf. 1 Chron 16:29 and Ps 28:2).

The phrase “his holy courtyard” almost certainly connotes the temple. This is suggested by three pieces of evidence. First, the word αὐλή was sometimes used to describe the architecture of ancient temples.<sup>69</sup> The modifying adjective “holy” and the personal pronoun referring to God provide strong grounds for concluding that the phrase refers to the temple courtyard here. Second, the only other occurrences of this particular Greek phrase in the Septuagint are in contexts involving the tabernacle.<sup>70</sup> Third, the superscription to LXX Ps 95 clearly sets the content of the psalm in the context of the restoration of the temple after the exile (ὅτε ὁ οἶκος ᾧκοδομεῖτο μετὰ τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν).

All of this raises the possibility that someone dependent upon a Greek translation of the psalm could quite naturally be led to interpret the οἰκουμένη of v. 10 in terms of the temple where God dwells. More significantly, though, the contrast between this unshakable οἰκουμένη with the shakable earth could be taken as implying that the place where God reigns is the *heavenly* temple; that is, the holy place that is not part of the shakable earthly realm. Similar to LXX Ps 96, the context of the rebuilding of the temple established by the superscription of LXX Ps 95 would likely conjure up, for anyone

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<sup>69</sup> See evidence in LSJ, s.v. “αὐλή.”

<sup>70</sup> These instances are 1 Chron 16:29, which occurs in the midst of David’s song of praise when the ark of the covenant was brought to the σκηνή that David set up in Jerusalem; and, Ps 28:2 whose superscription in the Greek clarifies that it pertains to a festival day at the tabernacle (ἐξόδιον σκηνῆς, 28:1; see, Pietersma, “Exegesis and Liturgy,” 126–28, who points out that in the LXX σκηνή has become a “semi-technical” term for the tabernacle). It may be objected that a reference to the tabernacle does little to substantiate a possible application to the temple. LXX Ps 28 itself, however, demonstrates that the conflation of the temple and the tabernacle predates the Common Era (compare the mention of the tabernacle in v.1 and the reference to God’s ναός in v. 9).

inclined to think in eschatological terms, the promise of the enduring eschatological temple.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike LXX Ps 96, Hebrews does not explicitly cite LXX Ps 95. Yet the author's knowledge of a heavenly tabernacle (cf. 8:2, 5) that Jesus entered when he ascended into heaven, and where he presented his offering before God (9:24–25) is remarkable in view of the preceding discussion of LXX Ps 95. If, as seems likely, the realm that Jesus entered is the same realm the author expects to endure after the final shaking of the creation/κόσμος (cf. 12:25–28), then the depiction of God's temple as unshakable in LXX Ps 95 may well be a thread in the larger web of biblical connections that supports his eschatological hopes. This is all the more interesting in light of the fact that Hebrews closely associates the heavenly tabernacle with the heavenly throne at God's right hand (cf. 8:1).<sup>72</sup>

Of course, none of these observations proves that the author interpreted LXX Ps 95 in the way suggested above (nor are they intended to do so). I want only to note that the kind of plausible, eschatologically oriented reading of the unshakable οἰκουμένη as the heavenly temple in LXX Ps 95 coheres well with the observation that the author

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<sup>71</sup> Of note here is the interesting vision in LXX Isa 33:20 of Zion/Jerusalem full of dwellings that will not be shaken and containing a *tabernacle* whose tent pegs will never be pulled up (μη κινήθωσιν οἱ πάσσαλοι τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτῆς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα χρόνον). Notably, this passage provides further evidence for the existence of the conceptual conflation of the tabernacle and the temple in the Second Temple period.

<sup>72</sup> This association between the tabernacle and the throne of God is already explicit in the biblical text where the Lord is depicted as a king who reigns from his seat between the cherubim, language that recalls the ark in the holy of holies (e.g., Ps 99:1; cf. 2 Kgs 19:15; Isa 37:16) and from other passages that link the temple with the divine throne (e.g., Isa 6:1; Ezek 10:1–5; 43:6–7). The motif is common in texts that depict a tabernacle/temple in heaven where God sits enthroned in the holy of holies (e.g., *1 En.* 14:18–20; *T. Levi* 3:4; 5:1).



likely considered the οἰκουμένη that Jesus entered to be the heavenly realm containing both the true tabernacle and the enduring Davidic throne.

#### 2.4.1.3 LXX Psalm 92

Of final note from the Greek Psalter is the reference to an unshakable οἰκουμένη in LXX Ps 92. The end of v. 1 states that the Lord, “ἐστερέωσεν τὴν οἰκουμένην, ἥτις οὐ σαλευθήσεται” (“established the οἰκουμένη, it will never be shaken”). Once again the superscription suggests the context in which the Greek psalm should be read: Εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ προσαββάτου, ὅτε κατῴκισται ἡ γῆ· αἶνος ᾠδῆς τῷ Δαυιδ (“For the day before the Sabbath, when the land was inhabited; the praise of a song for David”).

Of particular interest here is the comment connecting the psalm with dwelling in the land. Albert Pietersma argues that the ὅτε clause probably refers to the sixth day of creation and thus the point at which the earth was inhabited by human beings.<sup>73</sup> While the suggestion is intriguing, the mention of the Lord’s throne in v. 2 and of the holiness of his house (i.e., the temple) in v. 5 make it more likely that the time of the inhabiting of the land mentioned in the superscription refers primarily to the possession of the land of Israel—i.e., that land in which God’s appointed king and temple are supposed to be established.<sup>74</sup> This supposition finds possible corroboration in the fact noted above that the Greek of Exod 16:35 speaks of the sons of Israel eating manna for forty years, ἕως

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<sup>73</sup> See Pietersma, “Exegesis and Liturgy,” 134–35. Pietersma’s general point is to explain the presence of the psalm superscriptions that make exegetical comments linking the various psalms with particular days (i.e., LXX Pss 23, 24, 38, 48, 81, 92, 93, and 94), rather than functioning as liturgical guidelines.

<sup>74</sup> This is not to exclude completely a reference to creation as well. The author of Hebrews plainly sees points of contact between creation, inhabiting the land, and the ultimate entry into God’s rest (cf. Heb 4:1–11). Perhaps the LXX superscription already attests similar kinds of connections.

ἦλθον εἰς γῆν οἰκουμένην (“until they came to an inhabited land”). Obviously this “inhabited land” is Canaan, the inheritance promised by God to the people of Israel.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, the Greek psalm lends itself to being read as commemorating the time when God’s people took possession of the inheritance promised them. The οἰκουμένη in the psalm most likely, then, should be identified with Canaan, the land God swore to give Israel as an inheritance. With this in mind, the qualification of the οἰκουμένη with the future passive οὐ σαλευθήσεται proves interesting. Once again, if the psalm is transposed into an eschatological key, the commemoration of the possession of the land indicated by the superscription could easily be transformed into a look forward to the point at which the land will once again be possessed by God’s people in such a way that they will never be dispossessed (i.e., the οἰκουμένη will never be shaken). This future time would be characterized by the Lord’s reign (v. 2) and by the holiness of his house extending “for length of days” (εἰς μακρότητα ἡμερῶν), i.e., forever (v. 5).

I have already discussed above in section 2.3 the close collocation of the notions of inheritance, salvation, and the world to come in Heb 1:14 and 2:3–5. There I argued that the world to come is the ultimate inheritance that God’s people stand to gain if they hold fast to the word they heard about the Son. This emphasis on inheriting salvation, that is, the world to come, coheres well with the eschatological reading of LXX Ps 92 just

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<sup>75</sup> The Greek refers to this as the land of Phoenicia (cf. LXX Josh 5:1). This is another name for Canaan (so John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus* [SBLSCS 30; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 261).

detailed. There is even more evidence in the context of Hebrews implying that the author thought of the οἰκουμένη to come as the inheritance of the promised land *par excellence*.

The writer's discussion of LXX Ps 94:7–11 in Heb 3–4 allows him another opportunity to focus his audience's attention on the inheritance God promised his people. Drawing on the implicit link between the inheritance of the promised land and God's rest in LXX Ps 94:11, the writer refers to this ultimate inheritance as the σαββατισμός of God's people (Heb 4:9), namely, God's own rest (κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ, Heb 4:10). The correlation of this rest with the promise of entering the inheritance of the land is clear not only from the reference to the people's failure to go into the promised land alluded to in the psalm itself, but also from the author's mention of Joshua's conquest of the land in Heb 4:8.<sup>76</sup> The author's aside in 4:8—that if Joshua's conquest of the land had actually resulted in the people's entry into *God's rest*, the promise of entering that rest would not have later been spoken by David—highlights the eschatological frame of reference the author uses to interpret LXX Ps 94. Specifically, the psalm is assumed to point toward the entrance of God's people into the *enduring* inheritance—the rest that God enjoys from the creation, not the possession of the land per se. Put differently, the fulfillment of the promise to enter the land appears in Hebrews to be viewed in terms of entering the realm and rest that God himself inhabits—i.e., the rest he has in heaven. This is notably

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<sup>76</sup> For some recent discussion of this point see Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation*, 146–49; Matthew Thiessen, “Hebrews and the End of Exodus,” *NovT* 49 (2007): 353–69.

the very place that Jesus, the new ἀρχηγός (cf. Heb 12:2) or Joshua, has already entered.<sup>77</sup>

#### **2.4.1.4 Summary**

The uses of οἰκουμένη in LXX Pss 92, 95, and 96, especially if read through the lens of eschatological expectation, accord well with several themes that center on the enduring hope that the author of Hebrews encourages his readers to pursue. Specifically, the writer portrays Jesus as having entered both the enduring inheritance and the heavenly tabernacle, and as having sat down upon the eternal throne at God’s right hand in heaven.

The themes that converge around the term οἰκουμένη in Hebrews bear a remarkable resemblance to the nexus of very similar themes in these three psalms from the Greek Psalter. Moreover, the author of Hebrews cites a portion of LXX 96:7 and at length from LXX Ps 94. His copious citation from Psalms throughout the rest of his homily also implies that he was well versed in this book of Jewish scripture. In all probability, then, he knew not only the content of the rest of Ps 96, but also the context of the psalms surrounding LXX Pss 96 and 94.

Assuming, as seems virtually certain, that the author of Hebrews depends upon a Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures,<sup>78</sup> the mention of the unshakable οἰκουμένη and

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<sup>77</sup> It is surely significant that Joshua was one of the ἀρχηγοί in Num 13 who first entered the land (so, e.g., Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation*, 168–74; Thiessen, “End of Exodus,” 366–67). I discuss this issue in more detail in section 2.5.3 below.

<sup>78</sup> There can be little doubt that the author relied upon a Greek version of the Jewish scriptures. Moffatt argued for a version closely resembling that attested in A, which the author cited very loosely (*Hebrews*, lxii). Docherty’s recent study on the larger issue of the author’s citation of scripture helpfully stresses the

the shakable earth in these psalms could be interpreted in terms of a contrast. The possible links between the unshakable οἰκουμένη, the heavenly realms, the divine throne, and the promised land also allow for this realm to be interpreted as the eschatological inheritance that many Jews of the time were looking toward. Such an interpretation of LXX Ps 96:7 in Hebrews seems highly plausible.

It further seems probable, given the factors noted above, that the author of Hebrews would have read LXX Pss 92 and 95 in terms of the eschatological fulfillment of God's promises. Such a conclusion provides a plausible grounding in Jewish scripture for the association in Hebrews of the motifs of the Davidic kingdom, the promised inheritance, and the enduring temple with the term οἰκουμένη.

Before turning to examine notions of the world to come in other Second Temple texts, I note further that while these Greek Psalter texts allow for a dichotomy between the shakable earth and the unshakable οἰκουμένη, the implicit cosmology seems to suggest that the earth is to be viewed as the realm of humanity, while the heavens are the realm of God and his hosts. The earth and its inhabitants are the things able to be shaken, while heaven remains stable. This plainly implies a distinction between heaven and earth, but the nature of that distinction is not obviously spiritual. That is to say, Vanhoye's suggestion that, "*Kosmos* désigne le monde visible, matériel; *oikouménè* évoque une

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importance of the reality of textual pluriformity in the Greek translation tradition ("LXX") for assessing his appeals to Jewish scripture (*Use of the Old Testament*, esp. 124–30). She particularly highlights the dangers of assuming that an appeal to the text we know as the LXX allows the conclusion that the author has altered his source.

réalité spirituelle, le monde des relations entre personnes”<sup>79</sup> goes beyond the evidence of the texts just studied. In these psalms the references to the οἰκουμένη well accord with a cosmology that views the earth as the realm of humanity and the heavens as the realm of God. A vertical and spatial cosmological stratification is evident, but this does not necessarily imply a material/spiritual dualism. Some combination of the views of Andriessen and Schierse seems on the whole more likely. The evidence from these psalms suggests that the realm where God dwells is to be understood as the realm that God promised to give to his people. As such, this *is* a place intended for human habitation (cf. Heb 2:5).

Indeed, for an author as well versed in a Greek version of Jewish scripture as this one is, the use of inheritance language in chapter one (cf. 1:2, 4, 14), especially insofar as this is connected with the reception of the promised οἰκουμένη mentioned in 2:5, may be intended to call to mind a number of other images correlated with the narrative of the exodus, the period of wandering, and the conquest of the promised land<sup>80</sup> that were likely a part of the cultural encyclopedia shared by the author and his readers.

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<sup>79</sup> Vanhoye, “L’οἰκουμένη,” 253.

<sup>80</sup> The recent article by Matthew Thiessen (“Hebrews and the End of Exodus”) and the monograph by David Allen (*Deuteronomy and Exhortation*) rightly refocus attention on the author’s use of the imagery of the wilderness wandering to portray the auditors as poised at the edge of the promised land just as Israel was at Kadesh Barnea. In my opinion, though, both Allen and Thiessen fail to grasp adequately that the emphasis in Hebrews is more on a “New Conquest”—namely, the reality of the entry into and possession of the eternal οἰκουμένη to come, than on the wandering state of the people at Kadesh Barnea just prior to the initial command to invade Canaan. Jesus, the new Joshua, has already entered the eternal realm and been exalted over its citizens. As such, the gifts of that realm are already being dispersed to Jesus’ followers (2:4; 6:4–5). Moreover, they can in some sense already approach him in the realm of the eternal inheritance (4:14–16).

When the writer refers to the coming inheritance as the οἰκουμένη, the term itself may be a more direct allusion to the larger exodus narrative than is commonly recognized. The allusive presence of ideas associated with the entry of the people into the land would further explain why the author appeals to Ps 95 and the account of the people's failure at Kadesh Barnea in Heb 3:7–19.

That the author likely does correlate the promised land and the οἰκουμένη to come finds additional support in other eschatologically concerned texts from the Second Temple period. A survey of some of these works will demonstrate, however, that neither the exodus nor the period of wandering stands at the heart of Hebrews' eschatological vision. Rather, the author, like many other Jews of his era, saw the hope of the inheritance of the eschatological realities God promised Israel foreshadowed by the people's initial entry into and conquest of the land of Canaan.

#### ***2.4.2 The Coming World in Second Temple Literature***

While scholars debate the meaning of οἰκουμένη in Heb 1:6, the qualification of the term in 2:5 with the participle μέλλουσα demonstrates that the author can and does use the word to refer to a location other than the present earthly realm of human habitation. Rabbinic literature attests the belief that this present world (עולם הזה) will be transformed or replaced by a world to come (עולם הבא).<sup>81</sup> I pointed out above that Harold Attridge appeals to this fact to argue that the unmodified form of οἰκουμένη in Heb 1:6 would not be confused by the audience with “the world to come” in 2:5, but

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<sup>81</sup> For some examples see Str-B 4.2:815–16.

would be understood as denoting “this world.”<sup>82</sup> Yet, while the idea of a coming age and/or realm<sup>83</sup> in which God will bestow the blessing of the reward of an eternal inheritance upon faithful Jews is widely attested in Second Temple literature that is influenced by some form of apocalyptic eschatology,<sup>84</sup> a survey of apocalyptic texts from the second century B.C.E. to the second century C.E. demonstrates that the technical

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<sup>82</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 56.

<sup>83</sup> The larger argument of this study suggests that, while *Hebrews* is clearly not an apocalypse (see John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 [1979]: 1–20), the eschatological assumptions of the author of *Hebrews* are best described in terms of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology (see n. 84 below) and that the author does not presuppose a sharp dichotomy between temporal and spatial horizons (cf. 9, where Collins notes that an apocalypse discloses “a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world”). The “coming world” of Heb 2:5 and the “coming age” of 6:5 refer to the same eschatological reality—a new time *and* space. Thus the writer can speak of what is coming in terms of the inheritance of a heavenly city and country (11:8–16) and of a “better resurrection” (11:35), but also in terms of entering an ultimate “sabbath rest” (4:1–11) without necessarily mixing metaphors or being inconsistent. Whether or not he envisioned the new time and space as something altogether different/*de novo*, or as a transformation of the present world and age is harder to know for sure. On the one hand, the language of creation wearing out and being changed like a garment (Heb 1:11–12) and of being shaken one last time such that the shakable things are removed (12:27) suggests a strong discontinuity between the present world/age and the world/age to come. On the other hand, the author’s appeal to heavenly patterns as the basis for present, earthly realities (e.g., 8:5; 9:1–14) and his claims of present participation in the eschatological/heavenly realities (e.g., 4:16; 6:4–5; 12:22–24) suggest the possibility of some kind of significant continuity. I here argue that the author’s case for the Son’s elevation above the angels depends upon a belief in Jesus’ bodily resurrection such that the mortal body of Jesus was perfected or glorified before he ascended into heaven. If this can be shown, it would seem to imply some kind of significant continuity (as I argue, the Son’s resurrection preserves his human ontology and individual/personal identity). But exactly how the glorified body and the mortal body (and, by the same token, the perishing world and the world to come) relate to each other is harder to ascertain from the homily (cf. Paul’s struggles to clarify such relationships in 1 Cor 15:35–57). Possible parallels in Jewish apocalyptic literature (see section 2.4.2) suggest that the language in *Hebrews* of the removal of shakable realities does not necessarily mean that the author repudiates the notion that the coming world involves the transformation of the present creation.

<sup>84</sup> The phrase “apocalyptic eschatology” is notoriously hard to define. John J. Collins argues that, in contrast to prophetic eschatology, which focuses on the future flourishing of the community of the people of God, the hope in apocalyptic eschatology is oriented toward the elevation of the human being to a life like that in heaven, a life that exists beyond the limitations of corruption and mortality. Thus apocalyptic eschatology, like the hope of the prophets, “still deals with a communal context, whether it be the nation or, more often, the just, but its concern has extended to the life of the individual. By its focus on heavenly, supernatural realities it provides a possibility that human life can transcend death, not merely by the future generations of the nation but by passing to the higher, heavenly sphere” (*Seers, Sibils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* [SJSJ 54; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 84).



language evident in rabbinic literature was not yet standard. That is to say, it is not as clear from other roughly contemporary sources that the author and readers of Hebrews would know to make the kind of sharp, technical distinction between ἡ οἰκουμένη in Heb 1:6 and ἡ οἰκουμένη ἡ μέλλουσα in Heb 2:5 that Attridge claims they would likely have done.

More significantly, however, a survey of this literature will also show that some Jews explicitly linked their hope in a coming realm/age with the promise of receiving Israel's inheritance. As such, they did not appear to envision a spiritual/material dichotomy. Rather, the fundamental hope expressed in these texts is that of the inheritance of a renewed, incorruptible world. I turn then to examine these texts in order to provide a potential historical backdrop against which to assess the eschatological hope expressed in Heb 1–2.

#### ***2.4.2.1 The Promised Age, Life, and the New Creation at Qumran***

The trove of texts discovered at Qumran supports the inference that those who preserved, produced, and valued this diverse collection of texts<sup>85</sup> believed that the history of the world consisted of successive ages whose lengths are determined in advance by

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<sup>85</sup> One of the implications of the so-called “Groningen Hypothesis,” which argues that the people who lived at the Qumran site were a sect begun when a group of Essenes broke with the larger movement at the end of the third or beginning of the second centuries B.C.E. (see Florentino García Martínez “Qumran Origins and Early History: A Groningen Hypothesis,” *FO* 25 [1988]: 113–36), is that the Dead Sea scrolls are more likely to be something like a library of related materials belonging to a group rather than a more or less random collection of texts gathered up from around Palestine and hidden shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem (see F. García Martínez and A. S. van der Woude, “A ‘Groningen’ Hypothesis of Qumran Origins and Early History,” *RevQ* 14 [1990]: 521–41). Little in my argument depends on the accuracy of this hypothesis. I do, however, assume with Martínez and van der Woude, et al, that the texts at Qumran are related to one another and reflect the views of a particular group of apocalyptically oriented Jews. For several recent critical assessments of the Groningen hypothesis see the essays in Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

God. They sought to identify these ages. More importantly, though, they looked in hope for an age after the penultimate “last days” (אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים)<sup>86</sup> in which God’s promises would find ultimate, eternal fulfillment. Within this literature, several different terms and phrases are employed to express this hope for a future time of unparalleled blessing.

Column seven of the *Pesher to Habakkuk* (1QpHab), for example, speaks of “all the ages of God” (כּוֹל קִיְצֵי אֱלֹהִים) as coming (יָבוֹאוּ) at their appropriate times.<sup>87</sup> In 7:2 the *Pesher* assures its readers that when God told Habakkuk what would happen to “the last generation” (הַדּוֹר הָאַחֲרוֹן), he did not reveal to him (לֹא הוֹדִיעַ) the “span of the age” (גִּמְרֵי הַקִּיָּץ). The interpretation in the *Pesher* claims that “the final age” (הַקִּיָּץ הָאַחֲרוֹן) “will be extended and go beyond all the prophets say, because

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<sup>86</sup> See, e.g., *4QIsaiah Pesher<sup>b</sup>* (4Q162) 2:1; *4QIsaiah Pesher<sup>c</sup>* (4Q163) Frag. 23, 2:10; *4QCatena A* (4Q177) 2:10; 3:5–7; 4:7. For a complete list of occurrences of the phrase see Annette Steudel, “אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים in the Texts from Qumran (1),” *RevQ* 16 (1993): 225–46, esp. 227. Steudel observes that every occurrence of the phrase, save one (1QSa 1:1), is in the context of scriptural interpretation, often in explicit quotation formulas (Ibid., 227). This is remarkable given that the author of Hebrews also orients his christological interpretation of biblical passages around the belief that God speaks by way of scripture to the audience through a Son ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων (Heb 1:2, Steudel notes that the LXX tends to render the Hebrew phrase בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים as either ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν or ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν, 231–32). She also notes that the period of the last days is clearly identified as a time of testing or refining for God’s true people (228–29), a motif that is prominent in Hebrews (see below, and also sections 3.4.1–3.4.3).

<sup>87</sup> The belief in a sequence of ages evidenced in 1QpHab finds attestation in other Qumran texts. *4Q Ages of Creation A* (4Q180) 1:1 claims to offer an interpretation of “the ages” (הַקִּיָּצִים) made by God, including the “age to complete [...]” ([...] לְהִתְמַלֵּךְ). *1QGenesis Apocryphon* uses language reminiscent of Ps 145:13 when describing God as “the King of all Ages” (מֶלֶךְ כּוֹל עַלְמִים), 2:7; 10:10). In 1QM 1:8 the “times of darkness” (מוֹעֲדֵי חוֹשֶׁךְ) will be followed by a “time of God” (מוֹעֵד אֱלֹהִים). In addition to the words קִיָּץ, עֵלֶם, and מוֹעֵד, one also finds עֵת employed in contexts referring to the sequence of ages (e.g., 1QS 8:15; 9:12–14). This evidence suggests that while the notion of the periodization of history—the belief that history consisted of a series of discrete ages predetermined by God and culminating in an eschatological age—was of some importance for the community at Qumran, they could draw on any number of terms when describing that concept. For additional evidence of this belief in the Qumran texts see John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997), 54–56.

the mysteries of God are wonderful” (7:7–8).<sup>88</sup> In the broader context of the *Pesher*, this last age appears to be a final era of reward and vindication that will come after the period of suffering and humiliation inflicted on the community by the “Wicked Priest” and the Kittim. The words of Hab 2:3b—“If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, [and] it will not delay” (NRSV)<sup>89</sup>—are interpreted in 1QpHab 7:10–13 as a promise to those who are faithful to the Law that the final age is going to come and they will be the recipients of its blessings, provided they remain committed to the service of truth.

Unfortunately, the interpretation of Habakkuk’s prayer in chapter three, in which the prophet pleads with God to renew his mighty works, save his people, and crush the wicked (see esp. Hab 3:13), has not survived. Nevertheless, the idea of the final age being extended even beyond what the prophet himself envisioned implies a mysterious and wonderful blessing for those who faithfully keep the Law (as interpreted by the Teacher of Righteousness) in the midst of pressure to adopt the easier path being urged by the Wicked Priest.

The *War Scroll* (1QM) helps fill out the picture a bit more. Column one of 1QM speaks of the time of salvation for God’s people when wickedness will be completely defeated and the rule of the Kittim ended. Lines 8–9a read:

וּבְנֵי צַדִּיק יֵאִירוּ לְכוֹל קִצּוֹת תַּבַּל הַלּוּךְ וְאוֹר עַד תּוֹם כּוֹל מוֹעֲדֵי חוֹשֶׁךְ  
וּבְמוֹעֵד אֵל יֵאִיר רוֹם גּוֹדְלוֹ לְכוֹל קִצִּי עֲנוּלָמִים לְשִׁלּוֹם וּבְרִכָּה כְבוֹד

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<sup>88</sup> Translation is from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997–1998), 1:17.

<sup>89</sup> Apart from orthography, the citation of Habakkuk 2:3b in 1QpHab 7:9 agrees with the MT with the exception of adding a conjunctive vav to the ל of the final clause.

## ושמחה ואורך ימים לכול בני אור

And [the sons of jus]tice shall shine to all the edges of the earth, they shall go on shining, up to the end of all the periods of darkness; and in the time of God, his exalted greatness will shine for all the et[ernal] times, for peace and blessing, glory and joy, and length of days for all the sons of light.<sup>90</sup>

While the presence of the word **עולמים** must be reconstructed, the suggestion fits well with the context. The text envisions a period of time (**מועד**) characterized by God's rule as opposed to those ages in which darkness reigned. During this time, which presumably will consist of eternal times, God's greatness will shine forth and the sons of light—those who were faithful during the periods of darkness—will experience peace, blessing, glory, joy, and length of days.

The Hebrew phrase “length of days” (**אורך ימים**) occurs in MT Deut 30:20.<sup>91</sup>

There Moses exhorts the people to choose life by obeying God's Law (v. 19) rather than disobeying and, in effect, choosing curses and death. Moses points to God as the source of life and promises that God will grant “length of days” in the promised land if the people choose to obey the Law. When read eschatologically, the phrase “length of days” in 1QM probably connotes more than an exceptionally long life. Those who receive the blessing of living in God's age most likely experience eternal life.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>91</sup> The phrase also occurs in MT Ps 93:5 (92:5 LXX). See also MT Job 12:12; Ps 21:5, 23:6, 91:16; Prov 3:2, 16; Lam 5:20.

In any case, other texts from Qumran that share several motifs with this portion of 1QM more clearly indicate that those who remain faithful during the age of wickedness look forward to eternal life. *4Q Ages of Creation B* (4Q181) fragment one 2:2b–4a reads:

[God] delivered the sons of the he[avens] and the earth to a wicked community until its end. In accordance with God's compassion and in accordance with his goodness and the wonder of his glory he approaches some from among the sons of the world ... so that they can be considered with him in the com[munity of ... the g]ods to be a holy congregation in the position of eternal life and in the lot with his holy ones.<sup>92</sup>

In this text those from the world whom God elects attain to the holy congregation and thus gain “eternal life” (חיי עולם). In addition, *The Community Rule* (1QS) uses the phrase “length of days” and then goes on to describe this in eternal terms. When explicating the deeds and characteristics of the paths taken by the “sons of truth” as they live in the world, 1QS 6b–8 states, “And the reward of all those who walk in it will be healing, plentiful peace<sup>93</sup> in a long life (באורך ימים), fruitful offspring with all everlasting blessings, eternal enjoyment with endless life (שמחת עולם בחיי נצח), and a crown of glory with majestic raiment in eternal light.”<sup>94</sup>

After detailing the destruction of those who walk in the paths of darkness (4:9–14), 1QS further adds that tremendous conflict exists between those who are divided into these two different paths (4:15–18). Indeed, this conflict lies within the very heart of

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 373.

<sup>93</sup> Peace is an important attribute or quality of the eschatological age. In addition to this text and the citation of 1QM 1:9a discussed above, see also *4Q Time of Righteousness* (4Q215a) frag. 1, 2:4–6 which speaks of the age of wickedness ending and the “age of peace” (קץ השלום) beginning.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 77.

humanity (4:23b). At the appointed time of God’s visitation, those who walk in the upright path will be refined and the wicked will be judged (4:19–20). The refinement of the upright will involve their purification so that the portion of the wicked spirit that even they possess will be ripped out of the “innermost part” of their flesh and their humanity will be reconstituted (4:20–22a). This group are “those God has chosen for an everlasting covenant and to them shall belong all the glory of Adam (כול כבוד אדם)” (4:22b–23a).<sup>95</sup> 1QS 4:25a suggests that to partake of “all the glory of Adam” means to be a recipient at the “time of the determined end” (קץ נחרצה) of God’s “act of making new” (עשות חדשה).<sup>96</sup>

The collocation of the phrase כול כבוד אדם with the notion of the reception of exceptional and even immortal life in other texts is, at the very least, a striking fact. In 1QH<sup>a</sup> 4:15 those who have their sins forgiven also receive “all the glory of Adam” along with a “great number of days” (רוב מים). While there is nothing in the immediate context about inheriting a renewed creation, the notion appears to be attested later in 1QH<sup>a</sup>. Of particular interest is column 14 where, like 1QS, the scroll speaks of a coming time of purification from guilt (14:8). Those so blessed are established in God’s council for his glory (14:10). These are apparently among the sons of Adam to be included in God’s council who, together with the angels of the presence, will declare the truth and glory of God (14:11–13). There immediately follows the promise that a plant will sprout

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>96</sup> My translation. García Martínez (Ibid.) translates the phrases as “the appointed end” and “the new creation” respectively.

and grow to shade the whole world. It will be watered by all the streams of Eden and bask in a source of light that will shine eternally (14:14–19). Here, then, there seems to be a promise that the sons of Adam will stand together with the angels in God’s council. This elevation of Adam’s sons will correspond with some kind of renewal described with images that suggest an Edenic state that encompasses the entire world.

The phrase “all the glory of Adam” also occurs together with the promise of “lasting life” (לְצַיִי נְצִיחַ) in column 3 line 20 of the *Damascus Document*. The context of the statement comes right after a retelling of the failure of the people to possess the land at Kadesh Barnea (*CD-A* 3:7–12). The failure of that time is employed as a symbol for the congregation of the wicked whose actions continued throughout Israel’s and Judah’s histories to kindle God’s anger. Thus lines 8 through 10 read, “And the wrath of God flared up against their congregation. And their sons died through it, and through it their kings were cut off, and through it their warriors perished, and through it their land was laid waste.”<sup>97</sup> Those whom God pardons, however, will be the recipients of Adam’s glory and lasting life, if they remain steadfast to the teaching they have been given (3:20). The text does not explicitly say that these blessed ones will inherit the land that the others have lost, but that appears to be the implication. Moreover, the idea that the members of the new covenant will one day fill not only the land of Palestine but the whole world finds expression earlier in column 2. There God is said to turn against the congregation of those who broke the covenant (2:1). On account of their actions God “hid his face from

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 555.

the land ... until their extinction. ... And in all of [the ages] he raised up men of renown for himself, to leave a remnant for the land and in order to fill the face of the world with their offspring” (2:8–12).<sup>98</sup> This sounds like a reference to an eschatological age in which those who were faithful to the covenant would obtain not only the land, but the whole world.

The interpretation of Ps 37 in *4QPsalms Pesher<sup>a</sup>* (4QpPs<sup>a</sup>) provides another example of an eschatological age of blessing in which the land will be possessed. The inheritance will come to the faithful after a “time of penitential suffering” (מועד התענית, 2:10), which is also called a “time of refinement” or “testing” (עת המצרף, 2:19). The *Pesher* identifies “the congregation of his chosen ones who carry out his will” (4QpPs<sup>a</sup> 2:5)<sup>99</sup> as the ones whom Ps 37:9 says will inherit the land because they hope in God (cf. 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> 2:4). When interpreting the promise of the destruction of the wicked given in Ps 37:10, 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> 2:7b–8 explains, “Its interpretation concerns all the wickedness at the end of the forty years, for they will be completed and upon the earth no [wic]ked person will be found.”<sup>100</sup> The very next lines (2:9–12) clarify the meaning of the promise in Ps 37:11 that the poor will possess the land and enjoy peace by claiming, “Its interpretation concerns the congregation of the poor who will endure the period of distress and will be rescued from all the snares of Belial. Afterwards,

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 553.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.



all who shall possess the land will enjoy and grow fat with everything enjoy[able to] the flesh.”<sup>101</sup>

These citations of 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> show that the *Pesher* employs the motif of the exodus generation’s forty years of wandering as a lens for understanding how the present age of suffering and the future inheritance of the land relate to each other.<sup>102</sup> As with *CD* column three, the interpretation appears to encourage the community to view itself as those in the wilderness awaiting the death of the rebellious generation before they are able to enter the eschatological promised land.<sup>103</sup> That this is the point the *Pesher* seeks to make becomes clearer in 3:1–2a where, presumably while commenting on Ps 37:18,<sup>104</sup> the interpretation goes on to refer to “those who have returned (שׁבׁי) from the wilderness, who will live for a thousand generations, in salva[tio]n; for them there is all the inheritance of Adam (כול נחלת אדם), and for their descendants forever.”<sup>105</sup>

Yet, the notion of a “return” from the wilderness and entry into “all the inheritance of Adam” is curious. The language of “returning” seems to imply not only a reversal of the exile from the promised land, which is itself interpreted in terms of the wilderness wandering that occurred *before* the original entry into the land (i.e., not in

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<sup>101</sup> Slightly modified from García Martínez (Ibid.).

<sup>102</sup> A somewhat similar interpretation of the post-exodus wandering is attested in Wisdom, Philo, and Josephus (see Matthew Thiessen, “Hebrews 12.5–13, the Wilderness Period, and Israel’s Discipline,” *NTS* 55 [2009]: 366–79).

<sup>103</sup> To my knowledge, commentators have not previously noticed the possible parallel between the interpretation of the forty years of testing in Hebrews and the eschatological interpretation of Ps 37 in 4QpPs<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>104</sup> The end of column two is badly damaged. See the plate in John M. Allegro, *Qumrân Cave 4: I (4Q158 – 4Q186)* (DJD V; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), pl. XV.

<sup>105</sup> García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1:345

terms of the Babylonian exile), but also as something more than simply a repossession of the land of Israel. The land that will be possessed by those who endure the period of refinement is “all the inheritance of Adam.”

Another clue that this eschatological inheritance in some way exceeds the mere repossession of the land of Israel comes from the interpretation of Ps 37:34 in 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> 4:10–12. The psalm promises that those who observe God’s path will be exalted (יְרוּמְמָה) so that (ל) they will possess the land and see the judgment of the wicked. The verse is applied to those “who will see the judgment of wickedness, and with his chosen one will rejoice in the true inheritance (נַחֲלַת אֱמֶת).”<sup>106</sup> While this future inheritance seems to involve the group coming into possession of the temple,<sup>107</sup> the language pushes beyond the bounds of a limited temporal and physical repossession of the land of Canaan.

The preceding discussion, while not exhaustive, allows for some significant conclusions to be drawn. The sect that preserved and produced this literature appears to

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 347. The construct phrase בְּנַחֲלַת אֱמֶת is ambiguous. It could mean “in the true inheritance” (so García Martínez), or something like “a sure heritage” (Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996], 223), “a heritage of truth” (Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* [New York: Penguin Books, 1997], 490), or possibly “the inheritance of truth” (Allegro, *Qumrân Cave 4*, 47). Given 1) the eschatological tone of the document, 2) the interpretation of the return from exile in light of both the wandering and the original conquest, 3) the mention of the receipt of the “inheritance of Adam,” and 4) the fact that the phrase בְּנַחֲלַת אֱמֶת is the interpretation of Ps 37:34’s mention of “possessing the land,” García Martínez’s translation as “in the true inheritance” seems to fit best. The *Peshet*, in other words, emphasizes here neither the certainty of the inheritance, nor the idea that the possession of the land involves the heritage of some vague notion of truth. Rather, Ps 37 is here being read as a promise for a day of vindication when the community will possess the eternal inheritance and the wicked will die, just as they did in the wilderness before the original conquest of the land.

<sup>107</sup> 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> 3:11 reads, “They will inherit the high mountain of Isra[el and] delight [in his] holy [mou]ntain” (García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 345).

have considered itself to be living in the last days. As such, they looked for a coming age in which, so long as they endured the suffering of the final wicked age, they would be vindicated. This vindication would include blessings of peace and everlasting life (i.e., all the glory of Adam) in the realm of God's ultimate promised inheritance. Notably in some of the texts discussed, that inheritance would extend beyond the borders of the land to encompass the entire world (i.e., all the inheritance of Adam). No one technical phrase is consistently employed to connote this underlying apocalyptic eschatology. Instead the literature attests the usage of a variety of spatial and temporal terms and phrases, though the importance of the motifs of the land and the inheritance is notable.

Significantly, too, if we assume that the vision of eschatological promised land as the inheritance/glory of Adam has a relatively consistent content across the scrolls, then the *Peshet* on Ps 37 allows a remarkable conclusion. The period of the wilderness wandering can be used as an eschatological metaphor for the penultimate age. The "last days" can be described in terms of the testing during the time of wandering that sorted out those who would go into the land. Significantly too, enduring the time of testing is identified with doing the will of God. Those who do God's will receive the inheritance of the eschatological promised land. While the evidence presented by Thiessen concerning the ethical appropriation of such a theme, especially in Philo,<sup>108</sup> provides an interesting parallel to Hebrews, the *Peshet* at Qumran on Ps 37 indicates that an ethical

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<sup>108</sup> Thiessen, "Hebrews 12.5–13," 371–73.

interpretation of enduring the time of testing could work equally well in an eschatological, apocalyptic understanding of the periodization of the ages.

The ramifications of this latter interpretation of the penultimate age are likely to be significant for more early Christian texts than just Hebrews. In light of this evidence, however, Hebrews' periodization can be shown to have a potential parallel in at least one stream of Jewish apocalyptic periodization. The state of living in "these last days" (Heb 1:2), the call to endure testing faithfully in the pursuit of the inheritance "so long as it is called 'Today'" (Heb 4:13), and the link with the position of the people about to inherit the land all resonate with the eschatological vision of 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> (particularly in the larger context of the Qumran literature). The metaphor of the period of wandering in Hebrews may not, therefore, be reducible only to a philosophical or ethical vision of the soul's journey through life (as in Philo). Clearly the writer draws on motifs prevalent in similar instances of Hellenistic παιδεία. But, not unlike 4QpPs<sup>a</sup>, he locates these motifs within a larger understanding of the time of wandering as the penultimate age. Such a move looks remarkably similar to the kind of apocalyptic periodization attested at Qumran.

#### **2.4.2.2 *The Book of Jubilees***

The final form of the text of *Jubilees* can plausibly be dated to the second century B.C.E.<sup>109</sup> In the course of its renarration of the book of Genesis and the beginning of

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<sup>109</sup> So George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 73. The consensus position assumes one author for *Jubilees*. This view was challenged in the early 1970s by Gene L. Davenport, *The Eschatology of the Book of Jubilees* (StPB 20; Leiden: Brill, 1971), and has more recently been critiqued again by Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology* (SJSJ 117; Leiden: Brill, 2007). While it is likely a mistake to assume that an expression of apocalyptic would have to be internally

Exodus, *Jubilees* provides insights into God's eschatological plans for creation. The presence of periodization forms a clear structural trope in the text. Human history is demarcated into the time between successive Jubilee years. While the language of "ages" is not common in *Jubilees*, it does occur (e.g., "all the ages of eternity," 1:26; "for all ages," 2:1). The periodization of the text demonstrates a clear notion of different, predetermined times in human history. Moreover, the literary frame of the retelling of Genesis establishes the belief in an eschatological fulfillment of the history of Israel.

*Jubilees* begins by setting its account of Genesis within the context of Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai to receive the Law in Exod 24:15–18. While on the mountain, "Moses remained ... for 40 days and 40 nights while the Lord showed him what (had happened) beforehand as well as what was to come. He related to him the divisions of all the times—both of the law and of the testimony" (1:4).<sup>110</sup> As God speaks with Moses, the future sins of the people and their failure to observe the Law are predicted. The result of this failure is prophesied to be exile from the land of promise. God states, "Then I will hide my face from them. I will deliver them into the control of the nations for captivity,

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consistent (cf. John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* [2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 14–21), both Segal and Davenport argue that the various factual and ideological tensions present within the text betray the hand of a redactor working with older sources. The study of Davenport suggests, and that of Segal implies, that the apparent tensions in the eschatology of *Jubilees* may in fact result more from the reality of differing eschatological visions than from the limitations of referential language and the use of mythological imagery common to Jewish apocalyptic.

<sup>110</sup> *The Book of Jubilees* (trans. James C. VanderKam; CSCO; *Scriptores Aethiopic* 88; Lovain: Aedibus E. Peeters, 1989), 2.

for *booty*, and for being devoured. I will remove them from the land and disperse them among the nations” (1:13).<sup>111</sup>

This period of dispersion is not, however, the end of the story. Another period will eventually come. God goes on to say,

After this they will return to me from among the nations with all their minds, all their souls, and all their strength. Then I will gather them from among all the nations. . . . I will build my temple among them and will live with them; I will become their God and they will become my true and righteous people. I will neither abandon them nor become alienated from them, for I am the Lord their God (1:15–18).<sup>112</sup>

The depiction of this period continues a few verses later when the Lord goes on to tell Moses,

[T]hey will return to me in a fully upright manner and with all (their) minds and all (their) souls. I will cut away the foreskins of their minds and the foreskins of their descendants’ minds. I will create a holy spirit for them and will purify them in order that they may not turn away from me from that time forever. . . . I will become their father and they will become my children. All of them will be called children of the living God. Every angel and every spirit will know them. . . . Now you write all these words which I will tell you on this mountain: what is first and what is last and what is to come during the divisions of time which are in the law and which are in the testimony and in the weeks of their jubilees until eternity—until the time when I descend and live with them throughout all the ages of eternity. (1:23–26)<sup>113</sup>

God goes on to command the angel of the presence to give Moses an account of what has happened and will happen,

[F]rom the beginning of the creation until the time when my temple is built among them throughout the ages of eternity. The Lord will appear in the sight of all, and all will know that I am the God of Israel, the father of all Jacob’s children,

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 4 (italics original).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 5–6.

and the king on Mt. Zion for the ages of eternity. Then Zion and Jerusalem will become holy. (1:27–28)<sup>114</sup>

The angel of the presence then collects the tablets of the divisions of the years that trace the history of creation from its beginning until,

[T]he time of the new creation when the heavens, the earth, and all their creatures will be renewed like the powers of the sky and like all the creatures of the earth, until the time when the temple of the Lord will be created in Jerusalem on Mt. Zion. All the luminaries will be renewed for (the purposes of) healing, health, and blessing for all the elect ones of Israel and so that it may remain this way from that time throughout all the days of the earth. (1:29)<sup>115</sup>

The angel proceeds to relate to Moses the basic content of these tablets (i.e., the book of Genesis) which Moses apparently transcribes.

With this extensive introduction, the retelling of the narrative of Genesis and of the exodus that follows in the rest of *Jubilees* occurs within an eschatological frame of reference. For the purposes of this study, three especially significant conclusions can be drawn from the material reviewed above.

First, at the center of this vision of the future lies the restoration of the people of Israel to the land God promised to them. A day is coming after their expulsion from the land of promise in which they will be regathered. At that time God will purify the people and create for them a holy spirit such that they will never again forsake the commandments.<sup>116</sup> Along with this restoration and purification, God will descend and dwell permanently among his people in an eternal sanctuary.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 6–7.

<sup>116</sup> The point is reiterated in *Jub.* 50:5 which claims that after Israel's initial entry into the land, "The jubilees will pass by until Israel is pure of every sexual evil, impurity, contamination, sin, and error. Then

Second, this restoration is by no means limited only to the promised land of Canaan. In fact, the future redemption of Israel will correspond to a complete renewal of the world. The first creation and all of its creatures will be in some way transformed in accordance with the powers of heaven and the whole nature of the earth (1:29). The imagery is difficult to interpret, but given the promise of the creation of a holy spirit for God's people in 1:23, it seems likely that the renewal of creation in accord with the powers of heaven entails some new unity between God and the created realm. The promise that God will descend and dwell with his people eternally in an enduring sanctuary coheres well with this assumption. The renewal of all things appears to be one in which the created realm becomes like the heavenly realms—a fit place for the eternal, pure, and holy God to dwell.<sup>117</sup>

Significantly too, *Jubilees* promises that the entirety of the earth will be Israel's inheritance. While this idea is likely implicit in the promise of the world's renewal in *Jub.* 1, the notion that Israel will inherit the whole earth is stated more clearly in 32:18–19. Here the text recounts a vision of God to Jacob in which God says to him,

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they will live confidently in the entire land. They will no longer have any satan or any evil person. The land will be pure from that time until eternity” (Ibid., 325).

<sup>117</sup> Something like this might be implicit in *Jubilees*' explication of the logic of circumcision. In *Jub.* 15:27 the rationale for circumcision among the people of Israel is: “For this is what the nature of all the angels of the presence and all the angels of holiness was like from the day of their creation. In front of the angels of the presence and the angels of holiness he sanctified Israel to be with him and his holy angels” (Ibid., 92). The point seems to be that the circumcision of Israel's flesh enables them, like the angels, to be in God's presence. The promise of a future circumcision of the heart in relation to the creation of a holy spirit that God will give to the people might therefore suggest a fuller or more perfect circumcision (i.e., a complete transformation of the people not limited to the flesh) that will enable them to come fully into God's presence.



I am the Lord who created heaven and earth. I will increase your numbers and multiply you very much. Kings will come from you, and they will rule wherever mankind has set foot. I will give your descendants *all* of the land that is beneath the sky. They will rule over *all* the nations just as they wish. Afterwards, *they will gain the entire earth*, and they will possess it forever.<sup>118</sup>

Such a promise reminds one of the idea attested at Qumran that God's people will one day be given "all the inheritance of Adam." That is to say, *Jubilees*, somewhat like the texts from Qumran noted above, appears to envision the true inheritance of Israel not as a repossession of the land of Canaan, but as the possession of the entirety of the renewed creation.

Third, when this transformation of the created realm occurs and the people come into possession of the eternal promised land of the renewed creation, they will be purified and called "children of the living God," and "every angel and every spirit" will acknowledge that they are God's children (1:25). The link between the people being purified, their entering the eternal promised land, the giving of a holy spirit, and their being recognized by the angels and spirits as children of God is remarkable in light of its similarity with Heb 1–2. This is all the more interesting in view of the proposal argued above that Heb 1:6 depicts Jesus' exaltation as God's Son and the concomitant worship of the angels as occurring at the point when he enters the promised οἰκουμένη to come and makes a purification (καθαρισμός) for sins (Heb 1:3). Indeed, the collocation of these motifs may well result from a mutual dependence upon and similar interpretation of Deut 32:43 by both Hebrews and *Jubilees*.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 213 (emphasis added).

Deuteronomy 32:43 occurs in a context where the entry into the land is of paramount importance. Moses' Song predicts the faithlessness of Israel and the hope of final redemption for the people just as they are about to enter the land to possess it after the forty years of wandering. Deuteronomy 32:43 also speaks of God's future act of purifying the land for the people. While no explicit identification of the people of Israel as God's sons occurs in Deut 32:43, the witness of the Septuagint to Deut 32:43 refers both to the sons of God (υἱοὶ θεοῦ) and to all the angels of God (πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ) worshiping and strengthening him.<sup>119</sup> It is not hard to imagine someone interpreting this passage as referring to two different groups. Moreover, one could easily deduce from this version of the verse that the sons of God are to be equated with Israel since the rationale for this activity is that God is avenging the *blood* of his sons (τὸ αἷμα τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ ἐκδικᾶται). It is highly improbable that this clause would be interpreted as a reference to the vindication of the immortal and bloodless angels.

Yet, regardless of the possible source for the collocation of concepts that Hebrews and *Jubilees* share here, the primary point of interest for this study is the fact that both

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<sup>119</sup> One is reminded of the vision of the sons of Adam and the angels of the presence praising God together in 1QH<sup>a</sup>. The attestation of Deut 32:43 at Qumran (see DJD 14) famously provides partial support for the LXX reading. In particular, 4Q44 both reads שְׂמִים (where the MT reads גִּיִּים) and includes a reference to the worship of all the אֱלֹהִים. The Qumran text does not include a phrase equivalent to πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ, but the Hebrew clause that does show up (והשתחוּ לִּי כָל אֱלֹהִים) is strikingly similar to the clause in Ps 97:7 MT (השתחוּ לִּי כָל שְׂמַעִה) where, notably, the LXX attests: προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ (cf. Patrick W. Skehan, "A Fragment of the 'Song of Moses' (Deut. 32) from Qumran," *BASOR* 136 [1954]: 12–15, here 14. Skehan posits a Hebrew *Vorlage* for the LXX, even though 4Q44 does not fully support the LXX). The crucial point, though, is that the LXX could be read as mentioning two different groups joining together in worship (i.e., "sons of God" and "angels"). While 4Q44 is less clear on the issue (since it lacks a reference to "sons of God"), it is worth noting that two groups appear to be mentioned—the אֱלֹהִים כָּל and the עַם in the final clause (which reads: ויכפר אֲדַמַּת עַמּוֹ). Such a vision of redeemed humans worshiping together with the angels is clearly portrayed in Heb 12:22–24.

texts envision some recognition on the part of the angels that a person (in Hebrews) or people (in *Jubilees*) are the Son/sons of God respectively, precisely at the point that the eschatological purification and inheritance are obtained. I would further point out that the text of *Jubilees* is ambiguous regarding the question of an absolute dualism between the earthly and heavenly realms. On the one hand, *Jubilees* famously looks forward to a time when the bones of the righteous will rest in the earth and their spirits will enjoy peace (*Jub.* 23:31). This would seem to suggest that the spirits of the righteous escape the earthly realm. On the other hand, the entire thrust of the eschatological material in the first chapter points in the direction of a renewed earth as the inheritance of the righteous, not the complete abandonment of the earthly realm. Perhaps this is one of those tensions within the text that really does result from the redaction of more than one source.<sup>120</sup>

#### 2.4.2.3 4 Ezra

The late first century C.E. text of *4 Ezra* also attests the idea of a division of ages.<sup>121</sup> In chapter four the angel Uriel, who speaks for God, tells Ezra that the present “age/world”<sup>122</sup> (*saeculum*)<sup>123</sup> is coming quickly to its end (4:26; cf. 14:10–12, 17). Later

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<sup>120</sup> So Davenport, *Eschatology*, 32–40.

<sup>121</sup> Michael Edward Stone presents a succinct survey of the arguments for the date of *4 Ezra* in his *Features of the Eschatology of IV Ezra* (HSS 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 1–10. Clement of Alexandria cites *4 Ezra* in the latter half of the second century C.E., but the case for the end of the first century C.E. depends largely on internal evidence. In particular, the reference to 30 years after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (3:1) suggests that the author is reflecting on the destruction of the second temple. Additionally, in the eagle vision of chapters 11–12 the heads of the eagle are most likely symbolizing the Flavian emperors (Ibid., 10).

<sup>122</sup> As is the case for the Hebrew word עוֹלָם and the Greek term αἰών, the OLD notes that the Latin word *saeculum* can bear the temporal nuance of “age,” or the more spatial nuance of “world, human realm.” The Latin version of *4 Ezra* attests both senses (see, for examples, 4:28 where *saeculum hoc* is one of the *tempora*; and, 6:1 where *saeculum* stands in parallel with *terra*). Stone’s own comparative analysis of the

Ezra speaks with Uriel again and asks him if the world is still young or already growing old (5:50). The angel responds that the creation “already is aging and passing the strength of youth” (5:55).<sup>124</sup> Ezra asks in 6:7 when the division of the ages (*separatio temporum*) will occur. Uriel’s cryptic response mentions the end of “this age” (*hoc saeculum*) and “the beginning of [the age] that follows” (*principium sequentis*, 6:9).

When Ezra requests signs by which the end of the age can be identified, Uriel responds that the place where he is standing will tremble and shake (*tremescet et commovebitur*) at the announcement of the signs because the foundations of the earth (*fundamenta terrae*) know that in the end they must be transformed (*finem eorum oportet commutari*, 6:16). The end of “the age that is about to pass away” (*saeculum quod incipiet pertransire*, 6:20), the angel continues, will be marked by dramatic reversals of expectations. Babies will speak. Infants born many months premature will live. Full storehouses will suddenly be empty. Friends will turn against friends and the inhabitants of the earth will be terrified. After this time of trouble, the angel says that those who remain, “will see my salvation and the end of my age/world” (*videbit salutare meum et finem saeculi mei*, 6:25).

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versions of *4 Ezra* bears out the conclusion that the word עולם, which would have been used at points in the original Hebrew, carried both spatial and temporal senses in *4 Ezra* (Ibid., 179–80).

<sup>123</sup> All Latin citations are taken from the critical edition of Robert L. Bensly, *The Fourth Book of Ezra: The Latin Version Edited from the MSS* (TS 3/2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895).

<sup>124</sup> The translation is from Michael Edward Stone’s revision of the RSV in *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 142.

As Ezra reflects on the coming transformation of the earth and the end of the age, he grows frustrated with the present state of affairs. In his distress he reviews the days of creation in Genesis in order to remind God that he created the world and placed Adam over it and chose the Jewish people from Adam's stock (6:38–54). In language reminiscent of the Qumran sect's hope for "all the inheritance of Adam," he continues with his complaint saying,

All this I have spoken before thee, O Lord, because thou hast said that it was for us that thou didst create this world.<sup>125</sup> But as for the other nations which have descended from Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing, and that they are like spittle, and thou hast compared their abundance to a drop from a bucket. And now, O Lord, behold, these nations, which are reputed as nothing, domineer over us and trample upon us. But we thy people, whom thou hast called thy firstborn, only-begotten, kin, and dear one, have been given into their hands. If the world has indeed been created for us, why do we not possess our world as an inheritance (*si propter nos creatum est saeculum, quare non haereditatem possidemus nostrum saeculum*)? (6:55–59)<sup>126</sup>

Ezra's question is precipitated by the knowledge that God intends to bring the present world to an end. Thus the real point of Ezra's complaint seems to be that God has never made good on his promise to give Israel the entire world as their inheritance. In fact, the Gentiles are enjoying the kind of dominion that should belong to Israel. If, then, God brings this world to an end, it would appear that God has simply reneged on his promise. Israel will not, after all, possess the world that God made for them as their inheritance.

In response to this challenge, Uriel asks the following question of Ezra in 7:6–9:

If there existed a city full of wonderful things that was promised to someone as an

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<sup>125</sup> In the Latin this last phrase reads: "the first-born world" (*primogenitum saeculum*). I here defer to Stone's decision to favor the reading attested in the Syriac, Ethiopic, and some Arabic MSS = "this world." *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

inheritance, but the only way to gain the city was to walk along a narrow path with fire on one side and water on the other, could the heir obtain that inheritance without enduring the danger of walking the path to the city? Ezra replies that the heir could not possess the inheritance without walking the path (7:10). To this Uriel replies,

So also is Israel's portion. For I made the world for their sake, and when Adam transgressed my statutes, what had been made was judged. And so the entrances of this world (*hoc saeculum*) were made narrow and sorrowful and toilsome; they are few and evil, full of dangers and involved in great hardships. But the entrances of that coming world<sup>127</sup> are broad and safe and yield the fruit of immortality. Therefore unless the living pass through the difficult and bad experiences, they can never receive those things that have been reserved for them. (7:10–14)<sup>128</sup>

Such a response implies that God will remain faithful to his promise to Israel, but that the world they will inherit is not “this world,” which has been judged and is full of suffering. Rather, Israel will inherit “that coming world,” which will be a place of safety and immortality. This notion has already been hinted at in 5:40 where, in response to a similar complaint from Ezra, Uriel, again speaking for God, reminds him that he “cannot discover my judgment, or the goal (*finis*) of the love that I have promised my people.”<sup>129</sup> Later the angel explains that the things of this world are vain and empty, but that, “the time will come, when the signs which I have foretold to you will come, that the city which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden (*quae nunc*

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<sup>127</sup> That Latin reads *maiorum saeculum*. I defer here to Stone who follows the Syriac and Georgian witnesses (Ibid., 190).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 134.

*subducitur terra*) shall be disclosed. And everyone who has been delivered from the evils that I have foretold shall see my wonders” (7:26–27).<sup>130</sup>

Immediately following this pronouncement Uriel promises that there will be a 400-year period in which the Messiah will reign, after which he and those with him will die. The earth will be returned to silence. Then the world not yet awake will be aroused and that which is corruptible will be destroyed (*excitabitur quod nondum vigilat saeculum et morietur corruptum*, 7:31). The dead will be raised, judgment will occur, and the wicked will depart to a pit of fire while the righteous will go to a place of rest and delight (7:28–36).

The larger picture presented by the angel suggests a vision of the end of this world/age in which there is a time of trouble followed by a period in which God’s Messiah will reign and thus in some sense Israel will have its inheritance. Michael Stone is almost certainly correct to observe that the messianic rule occurs at the very end of the present age and that the subsequent resurrection and judgment mark the beginning of the next.<sup>131</sup> His suggestion that *4 Ezra* envisions the unseen city and the hidden land as also being a part of the present world (cf. 13:36)<sup>132</sup> and part of the messianic period is also likely to be right, though it is hard to square with the other references to this city in *4 Ezra*.

In 8:52 the city is mentioned in the context of the eternal realm. A similar description of the land may be found in 9:8. Moreover, in 10:26–27 even a momentary

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>131</sup> Stone, *Eschatology of IV Ezra*, 57.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 58, 218.

revelation of the glory of the unseen city is enough to wreak havoc in the present world. The Messiah's reign is clearly a good thing, but in *4 Ezra* it does not eclipse the ultimate salvation and inheritance of the promised world.<sup>133</sup> It seems on the whole likely that the messianic reign is itself to be understood as one of the signs of the certainty of the end of present age.<sup>134</sup> Thus, even though there is some significant revelation of the eternal land and city during that period, even the messianic reign is not to be mistaken for the fullness of the inheritance that God has in store for Israel.

Regardless of the particulars of its end-times chronology, *4 Ezra* clearly espouses the view that there are two worlds/ages—the present, perishable one and the eternal one to come. This latter world is reserved as the inheritance of the righteous. When Ezra complains about the fact that so many will be punished, while only a few will be rewarded in the world to come, Uriel responds that the reason why God “made not one world, but two” (*non fecit altissimus unum saeculum sed duo*, 7:50), is so that the righteous—who like jewels are more precious to God because they are few—will have a reward for obeying God and showing forth his glory in the present age (7:49–61, cf. 8:1).

Ezra, at least, is reassured by the angel that he is among those who do display God's glory and for whom “paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the world to

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<sup>133</sup> Various terms are used to describe the coming age/world (e.g., *futurum saeculum*, 7:47; *futurum immortale tempus*, 7:113; *immortale tempus*, 7:119; *perenis spes*, 7:120).

<sup>134</sup> The use of the word *enim* in the Latin of 7:28 would therefore be understood to refer back to the main or organizing thought of v. 26 (i.e., that the signs will come to pass and therefore the salvation of the coming age is certain) and not to the more immediate and subordinate ideas of the city appearing and the land being disclosed.



come<sup>135</sup> is prepared, delight is provided, a city is built (*aedificata est civitas*), rest is appointed (*probate est requies*), goodness is established, and wisdom perfected beforehand” (8:52).<sup>136</sup> Uriel adds in 9:8 that those like Ezra who will be saved “will see my salvation in my land and within my borders, which I have sanctified for myself from the beginning” (*videbit salutare meum in terra mea et in finibus meis quae sanctificaui mihi a saeculo*).<sup>137</sup> Presumably, too, they will dwell in the fullness of God’s glory, which does not reside in a complete way in the present world (7:112). The final clause of 9:8 is intriguing since it implies that the salvation the righteous will see will be in God’s land, but that the land will exist in that future time in the different (i.e., sanctified) state that God always intended. In any case, Uriel says this hope ought to lead Ezra not to worry about the fate of the wicked, but to think about the salvation of the righteous “those to whom the age belongs and for whose sake the age was made” (9:13).<sup>138</sup>

The notion of two worlds in *4 Ezra* might be taken to imply a dualism between two distinct and unconnected realms—a material realm and a spiritual one.<sup>139</sup> Yet, while the coming world of immortal resurrection life and rest plainly differs in significant ways from the present world, Ezra nevertheless speaks of that world in terms of God’s renewal of creation (*creaturam renovare*, 7:75).<sup>140</sup> Even the vision of resurrection suggests this

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<sup>135</sup> The Latin reads *futurum tempus*. Stone follows the Syriac and Ethiopic witnesses here (*Fourth Ezra*, 277).

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Stone suspects that the versions point back to the Greek phrase ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος (*Ibid.*, 290).

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>139</sup> Stone, *Eschatology of IV Ezra*, 44–48, notes that this kind of dualistic understanding of the book’s eschatology has been a mainstay in the secondary literature.

<sup>140</sup> Stone points out that the depiction of the world returning to silence before the resurrection and the dawn of the new age is another way in which the coming age is depicted in terms of creation (*Ibid.*, 56).

since the earth gives up the bodies it holds and these are reunited with the spirits that will be released from the chambers where they have been kept (7:32).<sup>141</sup> This coheres with Uriel's cryptic comment in 6:16 that the foundations of the earth are eventually going to be *transformed*. Importantly too, at least some of the elements of this renewed realm are already in existence. The city and land mentioned in 7:26 and in 8:52<sup>142</sup> are not newly created entities, but unseen and hidden ones that have been prepared in advance and will one day be revealed.

This last point is reinforced in chapters nine and ten when Ezra is told by Uriel to go out into a field to fast. There he has a vision of the glorified Jerusalem. He first sees a woman mourning over the loss of her son (9:38–10:4). He rebukes her by pointing out that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is a far greater loss than that of her son (10:5–24). As he is speaking, she is transformed into a glorious figure who flashes like lightning and whose cry shakes the earth (*commoveretur terra*, 10:26). When Ezra looks again the woman is gone and in her place stands “an established city, and a place of huge foundations” (*civitas aedificabatur, et locus demonstrabatur de fundamentis magnis*, 10:27).<sup>143</sup> Uriel later explains that this city is Zion (10:44).

The mention of the earth shaking (*commoveo*) and the city's great foundations (*fundamenti*) recalls Uriel's earlier comment that the earth would tremble and shake (*commoveo*) at the knowledge that its very foundations (*fundamenti*) are going to be

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<sup>141</sup> So also N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 160.

<sup>142</sup> While the term “land” is not explicitly mentioned in 8:52, the reference to paradise where the tree of life is planted, delight is provided, and rest is appointed echoes themes closely connected with the promised land.

<sup>143</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 326.

transformed (see 6:16). Indeed, as Uriel continues to explain Ezra's vision he specifies that he sent Ezra into a field without any buildings precisely because he knew that "no work of man's building could endure in a place where the city of the Most High was to be revealed" (10:54).<sup>144</sup> The revelation of the eternal, unseen Zion causes the earth and edifices built by human hands to be shaken to the point of destruction. Yet the verbal and conceptual links between these two passages allow the conclusion that the full future revelation of the eternal city will correlate with the transformation of the present corruptible state of the earth into an incorruptible state.

The foregoing discussion suggests that this unseen city of Zion/Jerusalem is the heavenly reality that God's people will inherit and that will one day be revealed when God transforms or renews the present world. This Jerusalem, like everything else in the coming world, will be eternal and indestructible. It will be the city where God's glory dwells in all of its fullness. There is no suggestion that the difference between the two worlds is one of a spiritual/material dichotomy. Rather, as Michael Stone observes in his analysis of *4 Ezra*, the coming world or age has to do with a "change of world order, above all by the passing away of death or corruption."<sup>145</sup>

A similar conclusion can be drawn with respect to the land. The revelation of the hidden land (7:26) and a coming sanctification of God's land such that it is the way it was intended to be from the beginning (9:8) makes good sense when viewed together with the claim that the foundations of the earth will be transformed and the creation renewed. That

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>145</sup> Stone, *Eschatology of IV Ezra*, 223.

is to say, the land, like the city, appears to be awaiting a transformation that will bring it into an incorruptible state in which God's glory will fully dwell. Such an interpretation may also help explain the comment in 7:30–31 that, “[T]he world (*saeculum*) shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings; so that no one shall be left. And after seven days the world (*saeculum*), which is not yet awake, shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish.”<sup>146</sup> The passage allows the interpretation that the *saeculum* (which here must mean the “created world”) will be renewed. Notably, though, the spatial, material entity in the present age appears to be the medium that will be transformed and present in the coming age. The *stuff* of the creation does not appear to be destroyed and abandoned as the present age ends and the future age begins, but to be renewed and transferred.<sup>147</sup>

Ezra's charge against God asserted that if this world ends, God has not kept his promise to give the world to Israel as its inheritance. The preceding discussion implies that such an accusation is mistaken. God will indeed give the world to Israel as an

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<sup>146</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 202.

<sup>147</sup> At first glance the 400-year interregnum might appear to be the time when the fullness of the world to come is given. There is, without question, a mixing of the promised blessings of the world to come with the messianic age. Stone convincingly argues that the messianic age is not depicted as an alternative to the coming world (*Eschatology of IV Ezra*, 140–1). Rather, the messianic kingdom in *4 Ezra* is temporary and penultimate. Thus, the larger discussion in the text suggests that while the messianic age will be a proleptic moment of blessing, a time during which many of the greater blessings are experienced, it is not to be understood as the fullness of the coming world—a world with no corruption or end. Bearing in mind Stone's own warnings about trying to push *4 Ezra* for too much logical or propositional consistency, I wonder if perhaps the messianic age is thought to be necessary so that the promised land is experienced for a time in this age even though God intends ultimately to give his people the entire world as their inheritance in the age to come (Stone may be pointing towards something like this conclusion when he notes the typological correspondence between the 400 years of slavery in Egypt and the 400 years of the messianic reign; 225). That is to say, perhaps the messianic era allows God's promises to be fulfilled in a both/and way—both within the limitations of the present age (and so a this worldly vindication of God's people), and in the eternal realities the coming age (and so the ultimate, eternal vindication of God's people).

inheritance, the very world he created. The world as they will ultimately receive it, however, will be the renewed world—the coming age, in which there will be no corruption and in which only the righteous will dwell. When this eternal age is finally brought about, the true land and city that God has prepared in advance will be fully revealed and present.

Before moving on to examine other texts, a final note on the language used for the coming world/age in *4 Ezra* is in order. Stone argues that the evidence from *4 Ezra* suggests that by the end of the first century the terminology common in later rabbinic writings of “this world” (עולם הזה) and “the world to come” (עולם הבא) was probably already in use.<sup>148</sup> He appeals in particular to the consistent use of particular terms in the other versions (i.e., Syriac, Ethiopic, and Arabic). He points, for example, to *4 Ezra* 7:12–13 where the Latin version contrasts *hoc saeculum* with the *maiorum saeculum*. Instead of “the greater world,” Stone notes that the Syriac has the “future world,” the Ethiopic reads “that world,” and the Arabic has “the world to come.”<sup>149</sup>

While we have no Hebrew text (or Greek translation) of *4 Ezra*, the data Stone has collected from the other versions clearly does suggest that the Latin term *saeculum* probably reflects a Greek *Vorlage* that read αἰών which, in turn, is highly likely to reflect a translation of the Hebrew עולם.<sup>150</sup> The comparative evidence amassed by Stone allows

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<sup>148</sup> Stone, *Eschatology of IV Ezra*, 55.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 244 n. 51.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 165–71. Stone compares the translation preferences of the LXX, Vulgate, Peshitta, and Armenian translations and establishes the tendency across these translations for the consistent use of particular words in each tradition where the MT has עולם.

the deduction that the phrase *hoc saeculum* likely reflects the underlying Greek phrase οὗτος ὁ αἰὼν, which suggests a Hebrew original עולם הזה. Thus it is plausible to suppose that the contrast between “this world” and the equivalent of “the world to come” was in play in the original Hebrew text of *4 Ezra*. Importantly, though, this language is not used consistently in any of the versions. The Latin, for example, attests the use of a wide variety of terms and phrases.<sup>151</sup>

While the present age/world is plainly referred to as *hoc saeculum* (e.g., 4:27; 7:12), it is also dubbed *saeculum* (e.g., 4:26; 6:59; 7:30). Moreover, the coming age/world is referred to in many different ways. Of special note for understanding Heb 1:6, it too can be referred to simply as *saeculum* (e.g., 9:8, 13), though more often there is also some qualifying term present (e.g., *futurum saeculum*, 7:47; *futurum immortale tempus*, 7:113; *immortale tempus*, 7:119; *perenis spes*, 7:120). This data suggests that no one set of terms has come to the fore as the preferred, technical language for “this world” and “the world to come” and that the unqualified term *saeculum* does not necessarily indicate this world as opposed to the *saeculum* to come.

Three conclusions relevant for this study may be drawn. First, the evidence from *4 Ezra* accords well with the picture from Qumran. Neither the former nor the latter attest a standard set of terms used to denote the present world and the world to come. Rather,

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 149–80. Stone compiles and compares the terms used in all the versions in order to establish the probable Greek and ultimately Hebrew terms that lie under the versions. He tentatively concludes that, “[I]t seems the word עולם reflects, as it is used in IV Ezra, a later state of development than that found in the Hebrew Bible, or in the sectarian documents from Qumran, and it is moving close to the situation in rabbinic Hebrew” where the word takes on a spatial nuance (180).

they show that the concepts could be indicated with a variety of terms and phrases. By the time of *4 Ezra*, the technical language one finds in later rabbinic texts is in use and it was likely common in *4 Ezra*, but it still stands as one set of terms among many others.

Second, it is significant that some parts of this text correlate the revelation of the eternal, unseen realm, which is said to exist already, with the destruction of the current corruptible world. Such language approaches the vision of the end found in Heb 1:10–12 and 12:26–29. In *4 Ezra*, however, it is clear that neither the shaking and destruction caused by the final revelation of the unseen world, nor the current existence of the unseen world stand at odds with the hope for the renewal of the present creation in the final age. The evidence of *4 Ezra* therefore suggests that one could speak of a final shaking of all things and the revelation of the unseen, eternal realities without necessarily repudiating the notion that the final age involves the renewal of creation.

Third, as Stone argues, the eschatological hope of *4 Ezra* is not best explained by recourse to a material/spiritual dichotomy.<sup>152</sup> The way the author plays with the temporal and spatial ambiguity of the word *saeculum*<sup>153</sup> and the way he envisions a transformation of the present world such that it will be incorruptible and a place where God's glory will permanently dwell suggests that the real line of division between this world and the next is that between the realm corrupted by Adam's sin and the perfect realm of God's renewed presence in creation.

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<sup>152</sup> See *Ibid.*, 213–15.

<sup>153</sup> From his comparative study of the translations of *4 Ezra* Stone concludes that the word עולם, where it would have stood in the original Hebrew version of *4 Ezra*, can carry in *4 Ezra* the spatial sense of “world” and does not, even when it can bear the meaning “age,” imply a material/spiritual dualism (*Ibid.*, 179–80).

#### 2.4.2.4 *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*

Dating from the late first century C.E. and likely written originally in Hebrew,<sup>154</sup> the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (henceforth *L.A.B.*) rewrites and interprets key moments in the biblical narrative from creation to the death of Saul. In the course of this exposition the text makes several fascinating comments related to the eschatological promise of a future world.

While retelling the story of Noah's flood, *L.A.B.* 3:10 adds the following comment to God's promise never again to destroy the world with a flood: *donec compleantur tempora* ("until the times are completed" 3:9).<sup>155</sup> The Lord goes on to say,

But when the years appointed for the world (*saeculum*) will be complete, then the light will cease and the darkness will be extinguished, and I will bring the dead to life and raise up from the earth those who are sleeping. ... And the world (*saeculum*) will be at rest, and death will be extinguished, and the underworld will close its mouth. The earth (*terra*) will not be without issue (*fetus*) or sterile for those who dwell in it; and no one who has been vindicated by me will be polluted (*coinquinabitur*). And there will be another earth and another heaven (*Et erit terra alia et caelum aliud*), an everlasting dwelling place (*habitaculum sempiternum*).<sup>156</sup>

The passage attests the belief in a sequence of times that will come to an end. At that point the age/world will also cease, the dead will be raised, and death will be abolished.

The earth will experience a renewal of fecundity and those inhabiting it will be freed

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<sup>154</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, "The Original Language of Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*," *HTR* 63 (1970): 503–14.

<sup>155</sup> All Latin citations are taken from Jacques Cazeaux, et al, *Pseudo-Philon Les Antiquités Bibliques* (SC 229; Paris: Cerf, 1976).

<sup>156</sup> Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: With Latin Text and English Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 93.



from impurity. Moreover, an eternal heaven and earth will be the dwelling place of those whom God has pardoned.

The question arises as to the relationship among the age/world that ceases, the earth's renewed productivity, and the new heaven and earth. First, it should be noted that the term *saeculum* almost certainly bears a temporal connotation in this context, not a spatial one. The *saeculum* ceases, but the earth is not destroyed. Rather, the earth does what God initially created it to do—it bears fruit (*fetus*) for its inhabitants. The eschatological imagery therefore suggests something more along the lines of a reordering and renewal of creation after an age of pollution (as in *4 Ezra*), than of the destruction of the earth. Second, if this is an accurate understanding of the text, it follows that the new heaven and the new earth is not a creative act *de novo*, but the state of the renewed creation as it will be when the old age, with its death and impurity, ceases to exist. The phrase “another earth and another heaven,” that is, names the time when the creation and its inhabitants will be eternally renewed. Further, the notion of the earth being an “everlasting dwelling place” is suggestive of God's promise to give Israel an eternal inheritance.

This last point, along with the conclusion that *saeculum* has a temporal sense in this text, finds clear corroboration. When recounting the death of Moses, *L.A.B.* depicts the Lord referring back to his promise never again to destroy the earth by flood. He then says to Moses, “To you ... I will show the land (*terra*) before you die, but you will not

enter it in this age (*hoc saeculum*)” (19:7).<sup>157</sup> As Moses looks upon the land, the Lord continues,

I will take you from here and lay you down to sleep with your fathers, and I will give you rest in your resting place and bury you in peace. . . . You will rest in it until I visit the world (*saeculum*). I will raise up you and your fathers from the earth in which you sleep and you will come together and dwell in the immortal dwelling place (*habitabitis inhabitationem immortalem*) that is not subject to time (*que non tenetur in tempore*). But this world (*caelum hoc*) will be in my eyes like a fleeting cloud and like yesterday that has passed. When I will draw near to visit the world (*orbis*), I will command the years and order the times and they will be shortened, and the stars will speed up and the light of the sun will hurry to set and the light of the moon will not abide; for I will hasten to raise you up who are sleeping in order that (*ut*) all who will be restored to life will dwell in the place of sanctification (*locum sanctificationis*) that I showed you. (19:12–13)<sup>158</sup>

Thus Moses is told that he will be able to see the promised land, but he will not be able to enter it in *hoc saeculum*. The implication that he will enter the land in the coming age is plainly stated later when the Lord promises him that he will be raised up so that he, together with many others, can actually inhabit the land he now only sees.

Such a comment provides evidence that, as was suspected in 3:10, *L.A.B.* views the future, eternal realm as the fulfillment of God’s promise to give Israel a land for their inheritance. Indeed, the parallels between this passage and 3:10 are remarkable. First, 19:12 actually mentions the promise God made in 3:10—the earth will never again be destroyed by a flood. Second, both passages speak of the light being removed. Third, the promise of the resurrection occurs in both places. Fourth, both portions of the text speak of a place that will be inhabitable forever. Fifth, and finally, the mention in 3:10 of the

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 122–23.

pure state of those in the renewed creation is recalled in 19:13 where the land is said to be “the place of sanctification.”

Similar themes occur in *L.A.B.* 23:11–13 when, just before Joshua’s death, the Lord promises Joshua that he will be raised. Joshua relates the content of this promise to the people as he declares to them in his farewell speech the words that God spoke to him (cf. 23:4–13). After a brief retelling of the call of Abraham, the promise to give the land of Canaan to his seed (cf. Gen 12:7), and the events at Sinai, God says,

I brought you into this land (*in terram istam*) and gave you vineyards [lacuna] cities that you did not build you inhabit. I fulfilled my covenant that I spoke to your fathers. . . . At the end (*in finim*) the lot of each one of you will be in eternal life, for you and your seed, and I will take your souls and store them in peace until the time allotted the world be complete (*quousque compleatur tempus saeculi*). I will restore you to your fathers and your fathers to you, and they will know through you that I have not chosen you to no purpose. (23:11, 13)<sup>159</sup>

Two points must be noted here. First, Jacobson’s translation of *saeculum* as “world” is potentially misleading in light of the points noted above. “Age” seems a much better rendering of the term. Second, however, and more significant, *L.A.B.* presents Joshua saying something remarkably similar to what the author of Hebrews says in Heb 4:8—that Joshua’s conquest did not represent the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise regarding Israel’s inheritance. *L.A.B.* portrays Joshua *himself* looking forward to the resurrection and, when read in light of what God earlier said to Moses concerning a time when many would come to life and dwell eternally in the land, looking forward to the day when the land will be eternally possessed by the fathers and their seed. The mention of

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 131.

“your seed” here appears to be an allusion to Gen 12:7 (a text which is actually cited in *L.A.B.* 23:5).

The effect of locating a reminder of this promise within Joshua’s speech (i.e., after the land has been inhabited by the people) and of linking it with the promise of resurrection seems clear—the full possession of the inheritance promised to Abraham will only come when God’s people are given the blessing of the eternal resurrection life. This is consistent with God’s promise to Moses that, after the present age, he will be raised in order to dwell with the fathers in the very land he has been allowed to see.

When read together with God’s promise to Noah in 3:10, the accounts and contents of *L.A.B.* detailed above regarding the promises given to Moses and to Joshua suggest that the “another earth and another heaven” mentioned in 3:10 is intended to be identified with the inheritance God plans to give his people in the coming age. If this conclusion is basically correct, then *L.A.B.* attests yet another example of the kind of hope for “all the inheritance of Adam” expressed by the sect at Qumran. The hope for the inheritance of the promised land was, that is, interpreted by some Jewish eschatological thinkers as the promise that God’s people would inherit a renewed and sanctified/purified world (a new heaven and a new earth) for all eternity.

Notably, there is again no hint of a spiritual/material divide in the references to the present age and the one to come. Death marks the separation of souls from their earthly bodies, but the souls are preserved by God until the end of the present age. When “this age” ends and God visits the world, the dead will be raised out of the earth. The ideas that the souls are kept safe by God for the resurrection, that bodies will be raised

out of the earth, and that the different earth will be a place of purity all imply a reunion of those divinely protected souls with bodies that will no longer be subject to impurity, corruption, or death.<sup>160</sup> This further suggests that God's keeping the souls safe is not conceived of here as being the same as the resurrection. The former state begins with death, the latter event correlates with a renewed creation that is sanctified and transformed such that it too shares in the sanctified and incorruptible state. This earth and heaven is the inheritance toward which *L.A.B.* says God's people look. This is the promised land that Moses and all the fathers, together with their seed, hope to inherit.

Thus, as with some of the Qumran texts, *Jubilees*, and *4 Ezra*, *L.A.B.* also lacks consistent technical language for describing the present age and the age to come. The present world is described as *hoc saeculum* (19:7), but also as *hoc caelum* (19:13; literally "this heaven"). The hoped-for future world is called "another earth and another heaven (*et erit terra alia et caelum aliud*), an everlasting dwelling place (*habitaculum sempiternum habitabitis inhabitationem immortalem*)," (3:10), and "the immortal dwelling place (*habitabitis inhabitationem immortalem*) that is not subject to time (*que non tenetur in tempore*)" (19:13). It is also referred to as "the new age (*novum saeculum*)," (23:8), and "the age without measure (*inmensurabile saeculum*)" (34:3). Importantly too, the promised land (*terra*) is depicted as spanning both the ages (19:7, 12–13).

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<sup>160</sup> Cf. Wright, *Resurrection*, 189–90.

#### 2.4.2.5 2 *Baruch*

Likely written in Greek in the early second century C.E.<sup>161</sup> the text known to us mainly in Syriac translation as 2 *Baruch* reflects on the second destruction of the temple in the guise of the experience of Baruch, the scribe who worked with Jeremiah, after the first destruction in 587 B.C.E. As with the other literature surveyed above, 2 *Baruch* also looks for a day to come in which a definitive transformation of the present world will occur, and death and corruptibility will no longer exist.

The work begins with God's revelation to Baruch that Jerusalem is about to face destruction and the people will be exiled on account of their sins. Baruch responds by asking to know what will happen after this destruction. He implies that such a judgment will result in God's own glory being diminished and his promises left unfulfilled. To this God answers, "This city will be delivered up for a time, And the people will be chastened for a time, And the world will not be forgotten" (4:1).<sup>162</sup>

The collocation of a temporary judgment on the city and the people with the statement that the world will not be forgotten is intriguing insofar as the linkage implies a direct relationship between the fate of God's people and the world. But more significantly, the Lord continues:

Or do you think that this is the city of which I said: On the palms of my hands I have carved you? It is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with me, that was already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. And I showed it to Adam before he sinned. But when

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<sup>161</sup> A. F. J. Klijn, "2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:615–52, here 616–17.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 622.

he transgressed the commandment, it was taken away from him—as also Paradise. After these things I showed it to my servant Abraham in the night between the portions of the victims. And again I showed it also to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed him the likeness of the tabernacle and all its vessels. Behold, now it is preserved with me—as also Paradise. (4:2–6)<sup>163</sup>

This passage attests the belief in an eternal city and tabernacle/temple that God prepared for humanity and would have allowed Adam to possess had he not disobeyed. Two points are of special interest for the purposes of this study.

First, the response given here to Baruch’s implicit challenge of God’s faithfulness to his promises demonstrates that the fullness of God’s promises is not to be identified with the present city and temple. Rather, God’s people will one day possess the true city and temple presently kept by God—presumably in heaven.<sup>164</sup> This inheritance is the one Adam, Abraham, and Moses saw and to which they looked forward. The reference to Abraham seeing this city in between the pieces of the victims recalls Gen 15:17–21 and further implies that it is not only the true city that is coming, but the true promised land itself. This follows from the fact that the content of the covenant God made with Abraham as the fire pot and torch passed between the portions of the sacrifices was, “To your descendants I give this land” (Gen 15:18, NRSV).

Second, as noted above, God’s response to Baruch establishes a definite connection between God’s people and the state of the world. In view of the other texts discussed above, one suspects that the mention of the world together with the fate of

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Gal 4:26. It may be significant that all three of the individuals mentioned here are also attested in other texts as ascending into heaven. What they see, in other words, is located in heaven. For more on these ascension accounts, see chapter three of this study below.

Jerusalem and its people, and the mention of Adam in 4:3 points toward a notion of the coming inheritance as consisting not simply of the repossession of the promised land, but of the possession of the whole world.

This suspicion finds confirmation later in the document. Baruch further pushes God for an explanation of why those who are righteous suffer and die. He speaks directly to God saying, “[Y]ou said that you would make a man for this world as a guardian over your works that it should be known that he was not created for the world, but the world for him. And now, I see that the world which was made for us, behold, it remains; but we, for whom it was made, depart” (14:18–19).<sup>165</sup> To this the Lord responds,

You are rightly astonished about man’s departure. . . . [W]ith regard to the righteous ones, those whom you said the world has come on their account, yes, also that which is coming is on their account. For this world is to them a struggle and an effort with much trouble. And that accordingly which will come, a crown with great glory. (15:1–8)<sup>166</sup>

The world, God agrees, was made for the righteous. Death does not change that fact, or threaten God’s intention for righteous humanity. Instead, God will give them the world to come as a crown with great glory.

The logic of this answer is worth exploring in more detail. Behind Baruch’s question and the Lord’s response lies the story of Adam and his disobedience. The event is mentioned in the near context (see 17:2), but is also clearly implied in Baruch’s comment that God created a man to be a guardian over creation. The Lord’s response that one day some humanity will, after enduring suffering in this world, obtain the world to

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 626.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.



come which will be for them a “crown with great glory” suggests that what was promised to Adam and to righteous humanity in general will come about in the next world. Of particular interest for this study is the possible echo of Ps 8:6 here in the depiction in 2 *Bar.* 15:8 of the world to come as “a crown with great glory.”<sup>167</sup> Intriguingly, Hebrews reads Ps 8:5–7 as promising that humanity will one day be “crowned with glory and honor” and hold a place above the angels in the world to come (Heb 2:5–9). The appeal to Ps 8 in Heb 2 indicates that the psalm could be read as bearing eschatological implications similar to those found here in 2 *Baruch*.<sup>168</sup>

For 2 *Baruch*, the reference to the story of Adam serves to reinforce the belief that the world was created for the sake of the righteous<sup>169</sup> and that they were intended to rule over it. Death, however, has prevented the righteous from obtaining their inheritance (cf. 16:1). God’s answer to Baruch—with its echo of Ps 8—emphasizes that when the righteous receive the coming world, they will have the rule (the crown and glory) that was promised them.

While the discussion of 2 *Bar.* 14 could be interpreted as having a universal scope, the particularity assumed behind the universal language becomes clear when Baruch later prays,

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<sup>167</sup> The terms *crown* and *glory* are not frequently collocated in the biblical text (forms of the Hebrew כְּבוֹד and עֹטָר occur in Ps 8:6 (where עֹטָר is a verbal form) and Job 19:9 (where עֹטָר is a noun). In the LXX forms of στέφανος or στεφανόω and δόξα occur in collocation or are used to describe the same item in Ps 8:5; Job 19:9; Sir 1:11; Isa 28:1, 5; Jer 13:18; Lam 2:15.

<sup>168</sup> See section 2.5.2 for a detailed discussion of Ps 8 in Heb 2.

<sup>169</sup> That the righteous are God’s chosen people is implied by the fact that they are described as those who do not walk in the ways of the nations and who do not depart from God’s ways (14:4). Moreover, these are they whose works should be counted toward the forgiveness of Zion (14:7).

How long will corruption remain, and until when will the time of mortals be happy, and until when will those who pass away be polluted by the great wickedness in this world? ... And now show [your power] to ... those who do not know, but who have seen that which has befallen us and our city, up to now, that it is in agreement with the long-suffering of your power, because you called us a beloved people on account of your name. From now, therefore, everything is in a state of dying. Therefore, reprove the angel of death, and let your glory appear. ... For as many years have passed as those which passed since the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all those who were like them, who sleep in the earth—those on whose account you have said you created the world. And now, show your glory soon and do not postpone that which was promised by you. (21:19–25)<sup>170</sup>

The world, in other words, was created for Israel, God's chosen people. Yet, as in *2 Bar.* 14, the problem with the present situation is corruption and death. God's people are not able to dwell in the world and exercise authority over it because they die.

God continues to answer Baruch's challenges by promising that a time will come in which the present situation will come to an end. This consummation will be preceded by a number of signs. There will be a period of great tribulation and then God will protect those who live in the land of Israel and provide for them (25:2–29:7). The Anointed One will come and the souls of the dead will rise (30:1–5). Baruch uses all of this knowledge to instruct the people living in the ruins of the city regarding the future. He tells them,

[I]f you prepare your minds to sow into them the fruits of the law, [God] shall protect you in the time in which the Mighty One shall shake the entire creation. For a short time, the building of Zion will be shaken in order that it will be rebuilt. That building will not remain, but it will again be uprooted after some time and will remain desolate for a time. And after that it is necessary that it will be renewed in glory and that it will be perfected into eternity. We should not, therefore, be so sad regarding the evil which has come now, but much more (distressed) regarding that which is in the future. For greater than the two evils will be the trial when the Mighty One will renew his creation. (32:1–7)<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Klijn, "2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch," 628.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 631.

The passage envisions the destruction of the rebuilt temple and a final shaking of the whole world. After that a third temple will be established that will be renewed in glory and will last for eternity. This final, ultimate temple will apparently come when, after having shaken the world, God will renew the entire creation (see also 57:2 where Abraham and his sons are said to have hoped in the world that will be renewed).

A bit later Baruch reinforces the point that those who obey the Law will inherit the renewed, eternal creation when he tells the people,

[T]hat which is now is nothing. But that which is in the future will be very great. For everything will pass away which is corruptible. ... For that which will be in the future, that is what one will look for, and that which comes later, that is what we shall hope for. For there is a time that does not pass away. And a period is coming which will remain forever, and there is a new world which does not carry back to corruption those who enter into its beginning. ... For those are the ones who will inherit this time of which it is spoken, and to these is the heritage of the promised time. ... For the coming world will be given to these. (44:8–15)<sup>172</sup>

Those who fear God and keep the Law will dwell eternally in the transformed and renewed creation that will remain for eternity. At the end of the text Baruch puts the point this way,

[W]e have left our land, and Zion has been taken away from us, and we have nothing now apart from the Mighty One and his Law. Therefore, if we direct and dispose our hearts, we shall receive everything which we lost again by many times. For that which we lost was subjected to corruption, and that which we receive will not be corruptible. (85:3–5)<sup>173</sup>

The implication is that those who obey the Law stand to gain more than just the land and the temple. They will inherit the incorruptible, renewed creation.

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 634–35.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 651.

This inheritance will be possible for them because, like the creation itself, they will be changed and transformed. Thus the Lord tells Baruch, “For the earth will surely give back the dead at that time; it receives them now in order to keep them, not changing anything in their form. But as it has received them so it will give them back. And as I have delivered them to it so it will raise them” (49:2–3).<sup>174</sup> In this way the dead will be identifiable at the resurrection. After that identification has been made, however, “the shape of those who are found to be guilty as also the glory of those who have proved to be righteous will be changed” (51:1).<sup>175</sup>

The righteous will be transformed such that they will be glorious like the angels (51:5). Once this occurs, they will be able to see and acquire the world presently invisible and the time now hidden from them (51:3, 8). The righteous will be elevated to their proper place. They will live in the heights and will be like the angels. All of paradise will be laid out before them and all the angels and the beings living under the throne will be shown to them. Some of these angels are curiously said to be withheld by God’s command and made to stand in their place “until their coming has arrived. And the excellence of the righteous will then be *greater* than that of the angels” (51:11–12).<sup>176</sup>

The meaning of this latter text is difficult to ascertain. In view of the logic of the discussion between Baruch and God in 2 *Bar.* 14 and 15, the point may well be that the arrival of the transformed righteous will lead to the displacement of at least some of the angels. In keeping with God’s intention in creating Adam and the promise of Ps 8, the

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 638.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., emphasis added.

righteous may here be depicted as being given their rightful place over the angels in the created order. If so, this account of the relationship between humanity and the angels in the world to come would be remarkably similar to the interpretation of Ps 8 given by the writer of Hebrews.<sup>177</sup>

The eschatological vision of *2 Baruch* consists in the hope that one day God's people will fully and irrevocably inherit the land God promised them. God will remain true to his promises by transforming the created realm. Then the eternal land, city, and temple will be revealed. The righteous will enter and inherit this coming world by themselves being transformed. At that point, they will apparently also be elevated to the position of authority over God's creation that humanity was originally supposed to have held. This elevation involves the transformed righteous being placed above the angels such that they can be said to be more excellent than the angels.

While *2 Baruch* does speak of the souls of the dead being resurrected (30:1–5) and of the righteous obtaining a glory that excels that of the angels, it is not clear that even here this is evidence for an eschatological hope entailing a material/spiritual dichotomy.<sup>178</sup> The dead are raised just as they died (49:2–3) and then transformed (51:1). They are able to take on any form they desire (51:10). Yet, as was suggested above, the

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<sup>177</sup> The elevation of humanity above the angels in the realm where God dwells is a significant theme in other apocalyptic texts. I discuss this subject in greater detail in chapter three below.

<sup>178</sup> The depiction of the resurrection in *2 Bar.* 42:8 involves the dust being commanded to give back the dead (cf. 50:2). This clearly implies that the stuff of this world is what gets resurrected. The transformation of the righteous that happens after the resurrection plainly involves their glorification and their ability to change form. There is, however, no suggestion that this transformation involves the sloughing off of the body raised from the dust of the earth. It seems plausible to interpret this transformation, particularly insofar as the distinction between the angels and the glorified righteous is not erased (see my discussion of this subject in section 3.2.3), in terms of the transformation of the earthly material of the body rather than in terms of a spirit/flesh dualism (cf. Wright, *Resurrection*, 161–62).

primary implication seems to be that the righteous will be renewed together with the entire creation. This renewal seems to be required in order for God to be vindicated from the charge that he has failed to give the righteous the world he created for them. The fundamental difference between the present state of creation and the renewed state is that there will be no more corruption—either for the world or for those that dwell in it. The world will be shaken and then the incorruptible creation, city, and temple will be inherited, just as God had promised and always intended for humanity.

#### ***2.4.3 Summary: The World to Come and the Promised Land***

The evidence presented above from some of the texts at Qumran, *Jubilees*, *4 Ezra*, *L.A.B.*, and *2 Baruch* stretches from the mid-second century B.C.E. to the early second century C.E. While the language and concepts of the later material (i.e., *4 Ezra*, *L.A.B.*, *2 Baruch*) appear more developed than those of the earlier literature, none of the texts suggests that the technical language found in rabbinic literature of “this world” and “the world to come” had become standard terminology by the first century. Instead, one finds a number of different terms and phrases being employed to describe the hope for the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel. More importantly, though, these texts attest to the existence of a relatively consistent pattern of eschatological beliefs held by some Jews over that time period. Four elements from this survey are particularly significant for this study.

First, the texts just examined demonstrate that a dichotomy between the spiritual realm and the material realm was neither constitutive of nor necessary for the eschatological hope of at least some Jews of this time period. When speaking of the

coming age/world, it was possible for some Jews to envision this entity as *both* a space and a time in which they would receive a renewed, incorruptible created realm where they would live in the presence of God's glory. Some of them envisioned a realm in which God's presence would be fully at one with the creation. The transition between the present age and the age to come was even depicted in *4 Ezra* in language that was similar to Hebrews, though the former text clearly also envisions the renewal of creation. Thus, far from necessarily denoting a spiritual/material dualism, the language of the world/age to come could refer to the perfect and eternal fusion of the heavenly and earthly realms.

Second, one common thread evident in these texts is that the possession of the renewed creation will be the full and complete inheritance of the land God promised to Abraham. That is, the promise God made to Abraham regarding the land is taken ultimately to be a promise to inherit the world as it will be in the coming age—incorruptible, pure, and consisting of the entire created realm. The notions of an enduring city, land, and temple—presently unseen, but one day to be revealed—are well attested in these texts.

Third, while not all the texts speak of the relationship between God's people and the angels, both *Jubilees* and *2 Baruch* appear to envision the time of the renewal of creation as the time at which the status of God's people vis-à-vis the angels will change. *Jubilees*, in particular, stresses that when this time finally arrives, the angels will acknowledge the people as the children of God. While this is probably linked with Deut 32:43, there is also an echo of the restoration of the human being to the place that Adam was created to hold (cf. Ps 8), a notion that also seems to be at play in *2 Baruch*.

Fourth, this discussion provides good evidence that the positions of Andriessen and Schierse were well founded. When Hebrews speaks of the οἰκουμένη to come as the inheritance of salvation (cf. 1:14, 2:5) and then appeals to the failure of the people at Kadesh Barnea to enter the promised land as a negative example for the readers' present situation (cf. 3:7–19), it seems highly plausible that the writer is working with a conception of the eschatological age that has a pattern similar to the kinds illustrated in the texts just surveyed.

The picture that emerges from this survey does not by itself prove that Hebrews' eschatological vision is similar to those expressed in these works. Rather, it shows that the motifs present in Heb 1 (e.g., the last days, sonship, inheritance, the world to come, interest in the place of the angels in relation to humanity) have good historical parallels in other eschatologically oriented texts from the Second Temple period. In light of these parallels, the proposal presented above—that Jesus' entry into the οἰκουμένη in 1:6 is his entry into the true, eternal inheritance God promised to his people—makes good sense. The basic pattern of a hope for the fullness of the inheritance promised to Abraham such that it will endure forever accords well with the idea of the world to come presented in Hebrews. Additionally, when viewed against such a backdrop, the author's discussion of the Son's elevation above the angels is rendered intelligible.

If this is an accurate assessment of Hebrews' eschatology, the probability that the homily does not rely upon a spiritual/material dualism greatly increases. When the author speaks of the unseen city, land, and heavenly tabernacle, and links the Son's entry into the οἰκουμένη with his ascension into the realm of heaven and God's presence, it need



not be the case that he posits the kind of spiritual/material dualism he is often thought to have assumed. Naturally other issues must be considered in order to address this concern in detail. I therefore return to the issue of the contrast between the Son and the angels so central to Heb 1 and the development of the argument in Heb 2.

### ***2.5 The Son of Man and the Angelic Spirits in the Οἰκουμένη***

Earlier in this chapter I traced the important contrast between the Son and the angels through Heb 1. I argued that the heart of this divide concerned the distinction between the angels' spiritual nature and the Son's position as the one invited to rule at God's right hand. In light of the other Second Temple sources discussed above, this invitation to rule likely represents an offer to reign over the unseen, heavenly realities that God's people stand to inherit when God finally brings them into the fullness of the promises given to Abraham. A detailed study of the author's interpretation and use of Ps 8 in Heb 2 substantiates this assessment.

In what follows I examine the importance of the angels in Hebrews, and then argue that the writer's exposition of Ps 8 in Heb 2:6–9 seeks to demonstrate that God always intended that the world be ruled by *humanity*. The author's exposition of Ps 8 therefore enables him to claim that the οἰκουμένη was subjected to the rule of the Son precisely *because* he became a human being.

#### ***2.5.1 The Ruling Angels***

Before discussing the author's interpretation of Ps 8, it is worth noting that the corresponding notions implied in 1:14 and 2:5—that the angels are not to rule over the world to come and that humanity will one day be elevated above the angels—probably

stem from the assumption that the angels do have some kind of significant authority over the present world/age. Some Jews certainly took the statement in LXX Deut 32:8 that the nations are divided according to the number of the angels of God to imply that the nations of the present earthly realm have been subjected to the angels.<sup>179</sup> Additionally, angels are frequently depicted as controlling various elements of the created order (e.g., *Jub.* 2:2; *I En.* 60:17–21).

As concerns Hebrews, it should be recognized 1) that the author alludes to Deut 32:43 (LXX) in 1:6<sup>180</sup> as evidence that the Son has been elevated above the angels in the οἰκουμένη; 2) that in view of the contrast between the reigning Son and the serving angels in 1:13–14, the statement in Heb 2:5 that the οἰκουμένη to come is not subjected to the angels most naturally calls attention back to the image in 1:6 of the angels worshiping the Son in the οἰκουμένη; and 3) that the present authority of the angels is implicit in the statement in Heb 2:2 (where the word spoken by the angels is binding), and in 2:14–15 (where the chief angelic enemy of humanity—“the devil”—is identified as the one who has the power of death and keeps all humanity enslaved by the fear of death). Given these points, the likelihood increases that Deut 32:8 lies below the surface of the logic of Heb 2:5. In light of the idea that the angels presently exercise dominion over humanity, *the statement in 2:5 that the coming world will not be subjected to angels presents a reversal of the way creation is presently taken by the author to be structured.*

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<sup>179</sup> The view that spiritual beings control the nations of the world is attested in Jewish scripture (e.g., LXX Deut 32:8; Isa 24:21; Dan 10:13, 20–21). Note also the elevated position of angels at Qumran (e.g., 1QM 10:12, 1QS 3:17–26), and in *Jub.* 15:31.

<sup>180</sup> This is not to exclude an allusion to LXX Ps 96 (see n. 65).

In the world as it is now, the angels have real authority over humanity.<sup>181</sup> The coming world, however, will be marked by a reversal of this situation.<sup>182</sup>

### **2.5.2 Psalm 8, the Elevation of Humanity, and the Son of Man: Hebrews 2:5–9**

The author's argument for the transposition just mentioned consists largely of a citation of and brief commentary on LXX Ps 8:5–7 in Heb 2:6–9. As I previously argued, Heb 2:5 signals a return to the main thread of the case the writer has been building regarding the definitive difference between the Son and the angelic spirits. As Heb 1:3–6 shows, the angels no longer hold top status among the inhabitants of heaven; the Son does. The author reiterates this point with more specificity in 2:5 with the comment that God did not subject (ὑπέταξεν) the οἰκουμένη, about which he has been speaking all along, to the angels.

With this introduction the writer proceeds in 2:2b–8a to cite LXX Ps 8:5–7. The logic of Heb 2:5 implies that, while angels were never supposed to rule over the οἰκουμένη, there is some group or individual to whom that right belongs. The author's subsequent citation and exposition of Ps 8 explains who he thinks has the right to rule

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<sup>181</sup> In his study on the rivalry between angels and humanity Peter Schäfer observes, "Das Verhältnis zwischen Menschen und Engeln und die Bedeutung der Engel für den Menschen ergibt sich aus der beherrschenden Stellung der Engel im Kosmos: Wie die Gestirne und die gesamte Natur ist auch der Mensch der Engel unterworfen" (*Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvormstellung* [Studia Judaica 8; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975], 27). For more evidence from the literature of early Judaism see 27 n. 97.

<sup>182</sup> This same sense of reversal of angelic authority may also pertain to God's past revelation (2:2; 1:1) and God's present revelation in the Son in the last days (1:2). Such an interpretation would help explain the parallel uses of the βεβαί- root in vv. 2 and 3. That is, the word in the past was given by the angels and confirmed. Now the word was spoken by the Lord and then by those who heard it from him and it was also confirmed, though as v. 4 makes clear, this confirmation involved the power of the age to come beginning to break into the present realm (compare 2:4 with 6:4–5). Jesus' entry into heaven has resulted in the power and glory of heaven being made available to his brothers and sisters on earth.

over that realm. From LXX Ps 8:5–7 the writer finds evidence for the inference that the honor of ruling the οἰκουμένη has been reserved for humanity (ἄνθρωπος).

The portion of the psalm as cited in Hebrews reads: “What is ἄνθρωπος that you remember him, or υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου that you consider him? You made him for a brief time lower than the angels. You crowned him with glory and honor. You subjected (ὑπέταξας) everything below his feet.”

One of the central questions debated in the commentary literature concerns the meaning of the phrase υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου. In keeping with the parallelism in the psalm, the Hebrew construct phrase אִנְשִׁי אָדָם almost certainly means “human being.”<sup>183</sup> In the context of Heb 2, however, it is possible to view the mention of υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου as yet another reference to the υἱός introduced in Heb 1. Arguments have been advanced on both sides of the issue. On the one hand, advocates of an anthropological interpretation of Ps 8 and the “son of man” language in Heb 2 note that the point of Heb 2:5—and thus of the subsequent discussion—seems to be that humanity will be elevated in the world to come above all things, including the angels.<sup>184</sup> On the other hand, those who argue for a

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<sup>183</sup> So, e.g., George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity* (exp. ed.; HTS 56; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 281–82.

<sup>184</sup> Some adherents of a strictly anthropological interpretation are the following: Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 55–58; Hurst, “The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2,” 153–54; Craig L. Blomberg, “‘But We See Jesus’: The Relationship between the Son of Man in Hebrews 2.6 and 2.9 and the Implications for English Translation,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (ed. Richard Bauckham, et al; LNTS 387; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 88–99; Riggenbach, *Der Brief*, 37–40.

christological interpretation of Ps 8 and the phrase υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου highlight the fact that the author primarily has one particular individual in view—the Son, Jesus (cf. 2:9).<sup>185</sup>

In keeping with those who recognize that throughout Hebrews Jesus serves as a representative for his brothers and sisters, I argue that both an anthropological reading of Ps 8 *and* a christological interpretation of the phrase υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου are likely to be in play.<sup>186</sup> As with the eschatological hope noted in some of the texts above, the author thinks that humanity will one day be restored to dominion over the world to come. But, as part of his understanding of the character of the penultimate age, he also believes that one human, the messianic υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, has already gone ahead of the people and entered that realm. The Son of Heb 1, who is finally revealed in 2:9 to be the particular human being Jesus, has gone into the οἰκουμένη and been exalted to its highest throne.

The first strophe of the LXX Ps 8:5 (“what is ἄνθρωπος that you remember him”) was most likely understood by the author as a reference to humanity broadly

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<sup>185</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 72–75 (Attridge provides a clear and concise survey of the various interpretive positions); Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk*, 77–79; Michel, *Der Brief* (14<sup>th</sup> ed.), 138–39.

<sup>186</sup> Various permutations of this interpretive move are widely attested (see esp. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 75 n. 59 for adherents). For a few recent examples see: DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 108–12; Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 54–59; Georg Gäbel, *Die Kulttheologie des Hebräerbriefes: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Studie* (WUNT 2/212; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 137. What prior proponents have often missed, however, is the precise way in which the writer’s messianic reading of Ps 8 fits the shift in the author’s rhetorical emphasis from the divine-like and preexistent qualities of the Son to the justification for the Son’s elevation above the angels on account of his having blood and flesh, i.e., being human (though see here Gäbel’s analysis of Heb 2:5–16 where he rightly highlights the author’s emphasis on anthropology per se as a key point of contrast between the Son and the angels [Ibid., 132–63, though see 159]). That is, Heb 2 (and the reading of Ps 8 presented therein) helps complete the real point of contrast between the Son and the angels. The Son is elevated to *royal* status as ruler in the heavenly realm because, unlike the angels, he is not a ministering *spirit*, but the ministering *human* high priest, Jesus (cf. Heb 2:17; 8:1–2). This new state of affairs for Jesus plainly includes his suffering and death, something he experiences as a human being. But one of the goals of this study is to show that the *ontological* significance of the Son’s humanity is not in Hebrews limited to the period of his mortality. He is lower than the angels for a time and exalted above them forever as a human being.

conceived, not one individual in particular. This assumption fits well with the logical flow of the argument. Given the link I argued for above between 1:14 and 2:5, and the motif of angelic authority in 2:2, the comment in 2:5 that the angels will not have dominion over the world to come appears designed to prompt the inference that the current situation will be reversed and humanity will have dominion in the world to come. Those who are about to inherit salvation,<sup>187</sup> in other words, seem naturally to be the ones to whom the οἰκουμένη that the author has been talking about is going to be submitted. Thus ἄνθρωπος here probably means “humanity,” not “a man.”

Within the larger argument of Hebrews, however, the second strophe from LXX Ps 8:5 (“or the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου that you consider him”) seems likely to have been understood as a reference to the figure of the Son (υἱός) so prominent in the author’s discussion in Heb 1.

Notably the syntax of the verse can be read as marking a distinction between ἄνθρωπος and υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου. The two strophes of Ps 8:5 are linked with the conjunction ἢ (the MT attests ἢ), which can carry a disjunctive sense. Thus the Greek allows the conclusion that the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου in the second strophe is to be distinguished from, rather than compared to, the ἄνθρωπος identified in the first strophe. Whereas in the original text the two strophes were most likely intended as parallel, comparative thoughts, the Greek rendering allows an interpretation that

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<sup>187</sup> Note the plural participle in 1:14 (οἱ μέλλοντες κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν). There are many heirs, not just one (cf. 1:9; 2:10; 3:14).

identifies a general group in the first strophe,<sup>188</sup> while the second speaks of a particular individual.

That the Greek can be construed this way does not, of course, mean that the author has construed it this way. Five additional observations, though, support the conclusion that the writer thinks in terms of one individual in the second strophe (the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) who is to be distinguished from a larger group in the first strophe (ἄνθρωπος).

First, on this reading the world to come would be seen to be subjected to humanity—those who will inherit it (1:14), while one particular individual would be identified as holding a special status. That this is likely to be what the writer means is indicated by the fact that this state of affairs has already been implied by his comment in Heb 1:9. There, citing LXX Ps 44:8, he speaks of the Son being anointed above his *peers*. Many interpreters identify the Son’s peers as the angels.<sup>189</sup> But the emphasis on the Son’s royal enthronement throughout Heb 1, not least in the image of the Son being anointed,<sup>190</sup> cuts against this conclusion. If the Son’s peers are the angels, then the writer’s emphatic claims that no angel has ever been called Son (1:5) or invited to sit on the throne at God’s

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<sup>188</sup> Blomberg, “‘But We See Jesus,’” 91–93, misconstrues the flow of the argument of Heb 1–2, but helpfully notes that every other absolute use of ἄνθρωπος in Hebrews refers to “humanity” (93 n. 27). While this does not prove that ἄνθρωπος in the Ps 8 passage must bear the same meaning for the author, it does suggest the likelihood that he would have interpreted the term in Ps 8 as “humanity.” Especially telling are the other instances of the singular form in the homily (Heb 8:2; 13:6).

<sup>189</sup> See n. 4 for examples.

<sup>190</sup> The image of anointing can hardly fail to have a royal connotation here. The author’s rereading of LXX Ps 44:7–8, such that the throne of God is the throne of the Son, suggests that the anointing is linked with the Son’s elevation to that throne. Additionally, Ps 2, part of which has recently been cited by the author, speaks of the Davidic king, who is called “my Son,” as the Lord’s *anointed* (מָשִׁחַ/χριστός; Ps 2:2).

right hand (1:13) lose their force. God’s invitation to the Son would negate the very claim, if the Son is one among his angelic peers.

Furthermore, as I noted in section 2.5 above, the real point of contrast in Heb 1 is not between the Son and the angels per se, but between the Son’s elevation to the heavenly throne and the angels’ *spiritual* nature. The fact that the auditors of the letter are later identified as having become μέτοχοι of Christ (3:14),<sup>191</sup> and that the author emphasizes the familial and *bodily* ties (blood and flesh) between Jesus and his siblings in Heb 2:10–18 (especially where this kind of bodily connection is set in contrast with the angels; 2:16) coheres with the conclusion that the Son’s “peers” are other human beings. The notion of one human being specially honored above a group of his peers (i.e., other humans), fits the logic of Heb 1–2 well.

Second, and closely related to this first point, this reading of Ps 8:5 also explains the logic of the author’s identification of the Son with his human brothers and sisters in the verses that immediately follow the psalm citation—2:9b–13.<sup>192</sup> Specifically, the Son, Jesus, is presented in representative terms. He tastes death for all (2:9b) and as a result is

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<sup>191</sup> Ellingworth notes that the term could be adjectival (“sharing in”) or nominal (“partners”) here (*Hebrews*, 226). He notes further that the term was taken to have a participatory sense as early as Ignatius (see *Eph.* 4:2.). While Ellingworth opts for the sense of “participation” (227; cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 117–18; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 118), the emphasis on the camaraderie between Jesus and those who believe in him, the familial language in Heb 2, and the importance of Jesus as the representative of his siblings in Heb 2 suggests that “peers” or “companions” is the most likely sense of the word here (so, e.g., Koester, *Hebrews*, 260; Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 87, though he overplays the business partner connotation). Lane is probably correct to criticize Hofius’ argument that μέτοχος is used as a technical term for the partners of the Messiah (Ibid.; cf. Otfried Hofius, *Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitl. Ruheort im Hebräerbrief* [WUNT 11; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1970], 133, 215 n. 820 where Hofius notes that a Greek fragment of *1 En.* 104:6 refers to the righteous as the μέτοχοι of the Lord of Hosts). Nevertheless, Hofius’ larger point concerning the eschatological significance of the term such that it connotes in this context becoming a “fellow heir” of those who enter the heavenly rest is, it seems to me, exactly right.

<sup>192</sup> For more on this point see section 2.5.3.



able to lead “many sons” (πολλὺς υἱοί, 2:10) into glory. He also proudly identifies with his siblings in the midst of the congregation (ἐκκλησία, 2:12) and declares kinship with them (“Behold, I and the children whom God has given me,” 2:13b). In light of the ongoing contrast between the Son and the angels in the context, this latter declaration is probably to be thought of in terms of the Son’s proclamation of his identification with humanity before God *and* the other inhabitants of heaven—the angelic spirits. In any case, it is clear that the Son is one of many sons, and he proudly identifies with this human family.

Third, the idea that Ps 8 promises dominion to humanity *and* singles out one human in particular, may partially explain the revelation of the name of Jesus at precisely this point in the argument (cf. 2:9).<sup>193</sup> The Son under discussion is finally identified as a particular human being—Jesus.

Fourth, it is clear that some first century Jews took would have understood the “son of man” to be the Messiah. Even apart from the debates concerning the meaning of the phrase in the Gospels, the formulaic nature of the phrase is evident in The Book of Parables from *1 Enoch* and is applied to the Messiah (cf. *1 En.* 48:2, 10; 52:4).<sup>194</sup> This is similarly suggested in *4 Ezra* 13. There Ezra has a vision of a man coming up out of the sea, flying with the clouds, and bringing judgment on those who war against God’s

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<sup>193</sup> See Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 56–58.

<sup>194</sup> So John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 81.

people. This is clearly a vision of the “son of man” figure of Dan 7:13.<sup>195</sup> When the vision is explained to Ezra by the angel Uriel, who speaks for God, the figure is called “my son” (*4 Ezra* 13:32, 37, 52). This agent of God’s salvation is not explicitly called the Messiah here, but he performs similar functions to the individual referred to earlier as the Messiah from the line of David in *4 Ezra* 12:32 (cf. 7:28–29).<sup>196</sup>

Before moving to the fifth point, one additional observation about the phrase “son of man” is worth noting. Already in Dan 7:13, 27 a close association is made between the figure said to be “like a son of man/human being” and the holy people. Many interpret this figure as a symbol for all the holy ones, but the “one like a human being” can be understood in terms of one individual who represents a larger group.<sup>197</sup> Be that as it may, there can be no question that, to cite John Collins, “The earliest interpretations and adaptations of the ‘one like a human being,’ Jewish and Christian alike, assume that phrase refers to an individual and is not a symbol for a collective entity.”<sup>198</sup> In a similar vein Oscar Cullmann’s assessment of the “son of man” figure in *1 En.* 37–71 concludes that the figure is a human individual who represents a larger group of people. He

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<sup>195</sup> This is widely recognized. See, e.g., *Ibid.*, 82–84 (Collins even suggests that the original Hebrew version of *4 Ezra* 13:3, which speaks of the figure as “resembling a man,” probably read **בן אדם** or **בר ששש**); and, Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 384 (who seems to be less sanguine on the Hebrew original here than Collins).

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 211. Notably, Stone also argues that *4 Ezra*’s claims that the Messiah figure is both a preexistent, heavenly being *and* a man of Davidic lineage are not likely to be Christian emendations of the text (*Ibid.*, 210).

<sup>197</sup> See the excellent summary and discussion of the debate in Collins, *Daniel*, 305–10.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

concludes that the “son of man” concept in the Book of the Parables implies that “in *dem* Menschen *die* Menschen dargestellt sind.”<sup>199</sup>

That an understanding of the phrase “son of man” as Messiah *and* as the representative of the larger group of God’s redeemed people was current in some first century Jewish circles demonstrates the possibility that the author of Hebrews could have thought of the “son of man” in the second strophe of Ps 8:5 as the Messiah (namely, Jesus) *and* that he could have understood that “son of man” to be an individual who represents the ἄνθρωπος in the first strophe of Ps 8:5.

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<sup>199</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Die Christologie des Neues Testaments* (3d ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1963), 142 (emphasis original). See also the more detailed and guarded assessment in Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 183–87. The son of man in *1 En.* 37–71 is, according to Collins, a heavenly being associated with both the earthly people of God and the heavenly community/angels (two groups who are envisioned as one day being merged). This figure, though, corresponds closely with redeemed humanity. Unlike Dan 7, he is not a symbol of the corporate entity of God’s people. Rather, he is an individual who especially represents the chosen/redeemed humans in the way a king does, though to an even greater degree. In particular, the exaltation of the son of man guarantees the exaltation of the chosen ones. He suggests the figure “is not a personification of the righteous community, but is conceived, in mythological fashion, as its heavenly *Doppelgänger*.” As such, he would be thought of as a real being who “symbolizes the destiny of the righteous community both in its present hiddenness and future manifestation” (187). One intriguing side note worth mentioning here is the fact that the terminology for the “one like a human being” (כְּבָר אִנְשִׁי) being *brought before* the Ancient of Days is language also used in sacrificial contexts (I am grateful to Joel Marcus for bringing this to my attention; cf. Jastrow, s.v. “בָּרַךְ”). In Dan 7:13 the “son of man” figure is brought near or offered (הִקְרַב בּוֹהֵב) before the Ancient of Days. While the Göttingen edition prints προσήχθη (“he was led”) in the section that presents the version connected with Theodotion, some witnesses to this version attest προσφέρω, a term often used in sacrificial contexts to denote the act of presenting an offering to God (for a more detailed discussion of this term see n. 30 of chapter four of this study). The Göttingen edition notes evidence for collocations of προσηνέχθη and αὐτῶ in Q<sup>c</sup> Hippol.p.210,18 et Ant.<sup>p</sup> Eus.dem.p.495,24 et ecl.et eccles. theol. PsAth. IV 697 = Sixt., 230. Variations on the clause ἐνώπιον (ἔμπροσθεν Eus.) αὐτοῦ προσηνέχθη are found in O L’ C’ 106 233’ 393 407 534 Co Arab Arm Eus.c.Marc. Chr. (= I 294.828) Tht. Cyr. I313 VI284 VIII648.1048 IX933 X309 Aug.civ.18,34. (+ αὐτῶ 62’ 311-III Chr. Tht.<sup>p</sup>). The Septuagint version printed in the Göttingen edition reads προσήγαγον αὐτόν. One wonders what kinds of resonances with the semantic realm of sacrifice an ancient Greek reader might pick up if his or her text of Dan 7:13 attested προσφέρω. The idea that the “son of man” figure ascends into heaven and is presented/offered before God certainly coheres remarkably well with the conception in Hebrews of Jesus ascending into heaven, appearing before God, and presenting himself as an offering (see my arguments for these points in chapter four of this study, especially sections 4.3–4.3.5).

Fifth, such an interpretation of Ps 8 provides an explanation for the apparent tension between the author's comments in Heb 2:8b and 2:9. In Heb 2:8b the writer explicates the statement in LXX Ps 8:7 that all things are subjected to him (αὐτῷ) as indicating that nothing stands outside his dominion. He adds, though, that the present situation (νῦν δέ) shows plainly that it is not yet the case that all things have been subjected to him. But in Heb 2:9 he goes on to affirm that, in contrast (δέ) to the way things presently stand, Jesus can be seen as already having been crowned with glory and honor. This latter statement, with its clear implication that Jesus has been given dominion over the οἰκουμένη and is seated on the throne (just as Heb 1 affirmed), seems to stand at odds with that of 2:8b. Is everything subject to αὐτός or not?

The tension is resolved if one allows that Ps 8 can refer both to the dominion of humanity in general *and* to the special elevation of one particular human. On this reading the various occurrences of αὐτός are ambiguous. Do they refer to υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, to ἄνθρωπος, or to both? This ambiguity enables the author to employ a double entendre. Bearing in mind the character of the penultimate age in Hebrews—an age in which one human has crossed over into the οἰκουμένη while those he represents have not—the author can speak of “him” in Heb 2:8b as both “humanity” and the “son of man.” In both cases, everything has not yet been subjected to “him.” Humanity in general has not yet been elevated, and the “son of man” in particular still waits for the complete subjection of all things to his rule. This latter point has already been implied. In the language of Ps 110:1 the writer has suggested that the Son's enemies have not yet been fully subjected to him (1:13). He later states this plainly in 10:13 (cf. 10:27). He affirms that one final

shaking of creation is yet to come (12:26–29). Furthermore, he looks for Jesus’ return, at which point Jesus’ siblings will receive their salvation (9:28; cf. 1:14).

And yet, the author can nonetheless go on in 2:9 to contrast the provisional character of the current, penultimate state with the reality that Jesus, the Son, *has* entered the οἰκουμένη and has been given dominion over it. The one Son has experienced the humiliation and suffering of all the sons. But he also, as one of those humans, has been singled out to be elevated to the position of supreme ruler of the οἰκουμένη.<sup>200</sup>

The attempt to draw a sharp distinction between the anthropological and the christological interpretations of the use of Ps 8 in Heb 2 looks, therefore, like a false dichotomy. The point the author seeks to make is that the highly exalted Son of God described in Heb 1 is also the Son of Man—a human being who is the Messiah. Thus, he is Jesus, the human being who has been selected from among his peers (1:9, 2:6; cf. also Heb 5:1) and has been anointed and elevated above them and above the angels to the throne at God’s right hand. In this way, he can be seen to be the representative for the rest of his family. Just as he has been ushered into the promised inheritance and placed at the pinnacle of God’s creation, so too will they (cf. 2:10–11; 12:2). Christology and anthropology are inextricably intertwined.

If this larger interpretation of the logic of the argument is correct, then Hebrews’ vision of the inheritance of the eschatological realm can be seen both to share much in

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<sup>200</sup> This hiddenness with respect to the larger human condition together with the vision of one representative human correlates well with the logic identified by scholars in the relationship between the son of man and the chosen ones in *The Book of Parables* from *1 Enoch* (see preceding note).

common with those found in the texts surveyed above, and to contain a radical difference. One of the first points of correspondence is the presence of the language of a coming world. A second is the notion that this coming world is the fulfillment of God's promise to give his people an inheritance. A third is the notion that in this coming realm humanity will be restored to its proper place in the created order. As was seen in *Jubilees* and 2 *Baruch*, humanity will no longer be subordinate to the angels. Yet a fundamental difference is that instead of envisioning all of God's people entering the promised land together, Hebrews imagines one Son entering ahead of everyone else—Jesus, the ἀρχηγός (Heb 2:10; 12:2) who, like the ἀρχηγοί in Num 13:2–3, entered the promised land ahead of the rest of the people. There is, then, the larger group of “humanity” on the one hand (LXX Ps 8:5a, cf. Heb 1:14), and there is one specially anointed representative, the “Son of Man” (LXX Ps 8:5b, cf. Heb 1:6, 9), on the other.

One implication of this discussion is that God's command to the angels to worship the Son as he enters the οἰκουμένη marks the moment at which the promise identified by the author in Ps 8—that humanity would one day take its rightful place at the pinnacle of the created order—is fulfilled for at least one human individual, Jesus, the Son. This helps explain the reason that the Son was exalted above the angels in Heb 1—the Son's royal status and corresponding elevation above the angelic spirits depends on nothing less than the fact that the Son is a human being. In keeping with the evidence from other Jewish texts of the time, the author of Hebrews understands Ps 8 to say that humanity will be raised to a higher status than the angels. Thus, it is ultimately humanity (ἄνθρωπος) in Heb 2:6 whom God is concerned to redeem and elevate. The οἰκουμένη

to come, in other words, is *not* subjected to the angels, but to the human beings who are about to inherit it (1:14; 2:5). The man called Jesus is the first human being to have obtained this inheritance. This conclusion finds further support in the very next verses.

### **2.5.3 Jesus and His Peers: Hebrews 2:10–18**

In Heb 2:10 the author describes Jesus as the ἀρχηγός responsible for leading many sons (υἱοί) into glory. As has been argued above, the author's inheritance language, his use of the term οἰκουμένη, and the parallels present in other eschatological texts of roughly the same time period all suggest that his eschatological vision draws heavily upon the exodus and conquest narratives. He is keenly interested in the motif of God's people entering (or failing to enter) their inheritance (cf. Heb 3:7–4:11; 11:8–10, 13–16). When he depicts Jesus as an ἀρχηγός, one suspects that the larger narrative of Israel being led in the conquest of the promised land by Joshua (in Greek Ἰησοῦς) is close at hand.<sup>201</sup>

Two observations further substantiate this point. First, in the Greek translation tradition of Num 13:2–3 Joshua and the others who first crossed over into Canaan to assay the land are dubbed ἀρχηγοί. God commanded Moses to choose twelve individuals to be sent into Canaan, one from each of the tribes of Israel, and each was to be a prince or leader among the people (כָּל נָשִׂא בְהֵם, Num 13:2b MT; πάντα ἀρχηγὸν ἐξ αὐτῶν, Num 13:2b LXX). The significance of sending twelve leaders into Canaan is obvious. The ἀρχηγοί are the representatives of the entire people. Their entry

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<sup>201</sup> See esp. Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation*, 168–74.

into the land proleptically symbolizes the entry of those whom they represented. Second, the writer of Hebrews refers to the provisional conquest of the land as being led by Joshua (see Heb 4:8).

Here, in Heb 2:10–18, the author appears to pick up on the representative relationship emphasized in Num 13:2–3 between the ἀρχηγοί and the people. Just as they represented and stood in solidarity with the people entering the land, the one Son represents and stands in solidarity with the many sons whom he leads into the glory they are about to possess (2:10).<sup>202</sup> The Son enters the οἰκουμένη as one of the many whom he represents. The writer’s comment in 2:11 that the one who sanctifies (i.e., Jesus, the Son) and those being sanctified (i.e., the people he represents) are all “of/from one” (ἐξ ἑνός) suggests in this context that this solidarity consists in the human nature of the Son and, more specifically, alludes to Adam.

The ambiguity of the genitive singular ἑνός, which could be masculine or neuter, has produced significant scholarly debate. Vanhoye, who argues for the neuter, comments, “On peut sous-entendre un nom comme *génos*, ‘race’, ou ‘*sperma*’, descendance. Mais on peut aussi ne rien sous-entendre et comprendre qu’il s’agit d’un seul tout.”<sup>203</sup> He goes on to add, “Celui qui sanctifie et ceux qui sont sanctifiés ne

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<sup>202</sup> The “glory” in Heb 2:10 should likely be understood in relation to the glorified state of the renewed creation attested in the eschatologically oriented texts surveyed above. Hebrews does not use the phrase “all the glory of Adam” as those at Qumran did, but something like this seems to be the point. The glory that Jesus has, and that all who hold firmly to their confession of him will obtain, is likely to be the glory God intended for Adam/humanity to possess. This is not only a status (a glory greater than that of the angels, and the rest of creation), but also a proximity to God, even a reflection of God inherent to being the being that reflects his image (see Heb 1:3). I discuss these issues further in sections 2.5.3.1 and 2.5.3.2.

<sup>203</sup> Vanhoye, *Situation*, 334.



forment pas un assemblage *de plusieurs* morceaux disparates; mais ils sont d'un seul tenant. ... Cette explication est celle qui correspond de plus près à la formulation choisie par l'auteur et au mouvement de sa pensée."<sup>204</sup>

Assuming a masculine form, a number of referents are possible. The figures of God,<sup>205</sup> Abraham,<sup>206</sup> and Adam<sup>207</sup> have all been championed as the individuals intended by the writer to be the "one" from whom the "all"<sup>208</sup> derive. Each of those mentioned could plausibly be the referent in this context. God is depicted in the near context (2:10) as the source of all things. Since this would include the children being discussed, the idea that God is the intended source of "all" in 2:11 is possible, particularly in view of the fact that the author continues to refer to the siblings in relation to God in vv. 12–13. Héring, however, insightfully comments, "Mais comme tout l'Univers, y compris les anges et toutes les créatures, doivent leur existence à Dieu, cette interprétation ne peut expliquer la parenté particulière entre le Christ et les homes."<sup>209</sup> Abraham also shows up in the near context (2:16) and the mention there of the Son participating in the seed of Abraham implies solidarity between Jesus and others who come from Abraham's loins. Finally, as noted above, Ps 8 was commonly linked with the creation of Adam in early Judaism. One

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> This is by far the most common interpretation. E.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 89; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 81 n. 64 (who otherwise recognizes the importance of Adam in the near context; cf. Gäbel, *Die Kulttheologie*, 154); Koester, *Hebrews*, 230; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 58; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 50.

<sup>206</sup> For example, Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 32; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 97–98.

<sup>207</sup> See, e.g., Héring, *L'Épître*, 34; Riggenbach, *Der Brief*, 52.

<sup>208</sup> "All" here is those humans who are "being sanctified."

<sup>209</sup> Héring, *L'Épître*, 34; cf. Vanhoye, *Situation*, 332.

could easily conceive of the citation of that psalm as evoking thoughts about Adam for the original auditors.

A firm solution is difficult and it may be the case that the very ambiguity that has produced so many possibilities reflects the design of the author.<sup>210</sup> Nevertheless, the suggestion that Adam is in view has much to commend it. Among all the options mentioned, the one that least coheres with the general thrust of the argument in this context is God. The contrast between the Son and angels that runs through this argument does not, as was demonstrated above, track out in terms of the divine attributes and actions of the Son, but in terms of his solidarity with humanity—the royal status of the Son is contrasted with the lower position of the angels because, as Heb 2 clarifies, the Son is contrasted with the lower position of the angels because, as Heb 2 clarifies, the Son is a human being, not an angelic spirit. Apart from an account of the Son’s humanity, this solution seems unlikely.

Whether one takes ἐνός as neuter or masculine, it should be noted that the other explanations surveyed recognize that the author highlights the importance of the unity of the Son and his brothers in terms of their shared humanity. The humanness of the Son and his siblings “correspond de plus près à la formulation choisie par l’auteur et au mouvement de sa pensée.”<sup>211</sup> Therefore, in the broadest sense the term “one” most probably connotes humanity. A more particular reference to Adam, however, appears likely.

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<sup>210</sup> So Attridge, *Hebrews*, 89, though he argues that God is the most likely referent.

<sup>211</sup> Vanhoye, *Situation*, 334.

The literature of the Second Temple and early Jewish periods provides ample evidence that two of the events with which Ps 8:5 was sometimes linked were the creation of Adam and the ascension of Moses into heaven to receive the Torah.<sup>212</sup> In particular, Ps 8 is invoked to illustrate angelic protest at both of these moments. While some of this literature is much later than Hebrews, I will argue that the traditions linking this psalm with both Adam's creation and Moses' ascension into heaven predate Hebrews.<sup>213</sup> I discuss the importance of Moses' subtle presence here in chapter three of this study. For the present, I continue to examine the possible presence of Adam.

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<sup>212</sup> See some of the evidence below in n. 6 and n. 12 of chapter three. I discuss accounts of Moses' ascension into heaven and the possible significance of this tradition for Hebrews in greater detail in chapter three.

<sup>213</sup> In chapter three of this study I deal briefly with the notion of the hostility of the angels when humans enter their abode. Moses, in particular, is a prominent figure who breached the angelic realm and faced hostility from the angelic inhabitants of heaven. Georg Gäbel has recently argued for the importance of this tension between humans and angels underlying the argument of Heb 1–2 ("Rivals in Heaven: Angels in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception* [ed. Friederich V. Reiterer, et al; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature, Yearbook 2007; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007], 357–76; cf. idem, *Die Kulttheologie*, esp. 132–44). Gäbel is among the few who recognize that the author's references to angels in Heb 1–2 are primarily intended to serve his larger anthropological observations. His observations regarding the significance of Adam, Moses, and the angels anticipate some of my own findings. I think our different emphases more or less reinforce our somewhat different, though at points highly similar, accounts of the logic of Heb 1–3:6. Yet, while I think he is right in recognizing that human elevation is the real point of the contrast between the angels and the Son, I see little evidence that the author's view of angels is "decidedly negative" (357), or that the writer thinks in terms of hostility/rivalry on the part of the angels towards humanity. With the possible exception of the speaker of Ps 8 in Heb 2, who is curiously unidentified (see my discussion of this citation in section 3.2.1.1), and the figure of the devil, the angels in Hebrews are portrayed as highly exalted, yet submissive and obedient subjects who serve both God and the humans over whom they are temporarily exalted. I can find no indication in the text that the angels resent having to worship the Son, or that they challenged God's intention to one day elevate humanity to the pinnacle of the world to come (as they are portrayed as having done in later Jewish accounts). Moreover, depictions of angels as fiery spirits, which are common in Second Temple Jewish literature, often seem to be intended to highlight the majesty of these beings—their fiery nature is a participation in the glory of God and allows them to dwell to one degree or another in God's presence. Such a depiction is not necessarily a criticism or negative assessment of their mode of existence. Later in Hebrews, it should be noted, the author encourages the congregation with a vision of worshipping together in the heavenly Jerusalem with the righteous community to which they belong. Angels are explicitly identified as fellow celebrants in that community (12:22). I suggest instead, that the logic works by way of tremendous respect for angels, not by way of highlighting or assuming hostility and

### 2.5.3.1 An Adamic Tradition in Hebrews 2?

Given the basic account of the eschatological vision of Hebrews proposed above, Adam's absence from the sermon is conspicuous. One might have expected a reference to Adam here in Heb 2 where the author focuses so much attention on Ps 8 and the humanity of the Son. Even in Heb 11 where the writer rehearses the role of faith in the lives of God's people from the creation (11:3) up through Jesus himself (12:2), the first named individual is Abel (11:4), not Adam. Nevertheless, while Adam is not named, the logic of the argument in Heb 2:10–18 suggests that an implicit reliance on traditions about Adam,<sup>214</sup> along with a number of other biblical characters,<sup>215</sup> is intended. Specifically, the “one” from whom the one who is holy and all those who are being made holy come (2:11) ought to be identified with Adam.

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rivalry. The goal of the argument is not to present the angels in a negative light, but to show how much greater the glorious, exalted Son and, eventually, all his siblings are than *even* the great and glorious angels. Thus, while I think Gäbel correctly highlights the importance of Adam and Moses traditions (though he wrongly misses the importance of the angels' priestly status; 359–60), I am not persuaded that the presentation of angels in Heb 1 puts the angels in any way in a bad light. Rather, the author's logic appeals to their glory as a means of emphasizing the even greater glory intended by God for humanity. Incidentally, such a deft employment of the *topos* of synkrisis lines up well with the admonition of Aelius Theon in his *Exercises* that synkrisis, at its best, compares items assumed to be equally good with the goal of showing somehow that one of the items in the comparison is nevertheless better (George A. Kennedy, trans., *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* [Writings from the Greco-Roman World 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003], 53). Similarly, see Hermogenes' *Preliminary Exercises*, though unlike Aelius Theon, Hermogenes thinks that comparisons of dissimilar things can be legitimate (Ibid., 83).

<sup>214</sup> A few other scholars have also argued for this (see, e.g., Bruce, *Hebrews*, 72–74; Gäbel, *Die Kulttheologie*, 142–44; Idem., “Rivals in Heaven,” 361–65).

<sup>215</sup> The others are Abraham (2:16), Moses (3:1–6), Joshua (one of the ἀρχηγοί who led the people into the land, cf. 2:10 and 4:8), and David (cf. 2:13a and v. 3 of David's hymn of praise in 2 Sam 22). As regards this last figure I would note that just as other citations in Hebrews seem to draw from more than one passage (e.g., Deut 32:43 and LXX Ps 96:7 in Heb 1:6), there also appears to be a double reference here. Given the citation of Isa 8:18 in Heb 2:13b, Heb 2:13a must be a citation of Isa 8:17. Yet, the confluence of themes in David's hymn in 2 Sam 22—in particular the focus on David's being rescued from death and the apocalyptic-like language used to describe that rescue—suggests that the 2 Samuel text is also in view.

In an article examining the traditions about Adam in Second Temple, early Jewish, and rabbinic literature, Joel Marcus draws the conclusion that, “Hebrews 1–2 ... is a powerful first-century witness to the legend of Adam’s exaltation above the angels.”<sup>216</sup> Marcus rightly grasps that a tradition about Adam likely underlies the logic of the author’s argument here.

To make his case, Marcus first isolates the basic contours of a common extra-biblical Adam story evident in the Latin version of the apocryphal text known as *The Life of Adam and Eve* (*L.A.E.*) and in the later document called *The Cave of Treasures*. Marcus recognizes that the *L.A.E.* probably dates from late in the first century C.E. while *The Cave of Treasures* dates from sometime during the fourth through sixth centuries C.E.<sup>217</sup> He seeks to demonstrate, however, that several pre-Christian and first century C.E. Christian texts assume portions of the basic outline of the story as it is found in this later literature.<sup>218</sup>

At the heart of this Adam narrative are three key moments.<sup>219</sup> First, the fall of Adam is explained by way of Satan’s jealousy and refusal to worship Adam when God commanded all the angels to do so (cf. *L.A.E.* 12:1–14:2).<sup>220</sup> As punishment, Satan and all the other angels who have not obeyed God’s command are cast out of heaven (cf.

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<sup>216</sup> Joel Marcus, “Son of Man as Son of Adam, Part 1,” *RB* 110 (2003): 38–61, here 55.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>218</sup> Marcus attributes only the elevation of Adam above the angels to Hebrews. As will become clear, I think the basic structure of the story he identifies lies below the surface of the argument of Heb 1–2 (cf. Gäbel, “Rivals in Heaven,” 364–72).

<sup>219</sup> Marcus, “Son of Man,” 52–53.

<sup>220</sup> Marcus (*Ibid.*, 54) points out that this notion, which is not even hinted at in the biblical account, is attested in Wis 2:23–24; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.41; and *3 Apoc. Bar.* (in Greek).

*L.A.E.* 14:2–16:1). To get revenge, Satan devised a scheme to have Adam and Eve cast out of Paradise and to bring death upon them (cf. *L.A.E.* 11:3; 26:2; 34:1–2). Second, after his fall, Adam loses the glory and dominion that God had given him when he was originally created (cf. *L.A.E.* 11:3; 16:2). Third, the narrative looks forward to a day when Adam and his descendants will be restored to glory and to their rightful place in creation (*L.A.E.* 27:1; 42:2; 47:3; 51:2).

While Hebrews lacks the particulars of the account in the *L.A.E.* (including an explicit reference to Adam or of the jealousy of the devil), the basic plot of this Adam narrative bears a remarkable resemblance to the argument for the contrast between the Son and the angels I suggest is central to the argument of Heb 1–2. Marcus notes the importance of the motif of the Son’s *glory* in Heb 1. Thus, for example, the Son is characterized in Adamic terms in 1:3 as “the full effulgence of God’s glory and the likeness of his being.”<sup>221</sup>

Marcus further points out that the designation of the Son in Heb 1:6 as the firstborn whom God commands all the angels to worship is “an allusion that is difficult to understand without a tradition such as that found in *L.A.E.* 13 informing it.”<sup>222</sup> *L.A.E.* 13–14 relates the devil’s own explanation to Adam of why he lost his place among the heavenly host. The devil states,

It is because of you [Adam] that I have been thrown out of there. When you were created, I was cast out from the presence of God was sent out of fellowship of the angels. When God blew into you the breath of life and your countenance and

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. Marcus also notes that Adam is called the “first-formed father of the world” (πρωτόπλαστος πατήρ κόσμου) in Wis 10:1.

likeness were made in the image of God, Michael brought you and made (us) worship you in the sight of God, and the LORD God said, “Behold Adam! I have made him in our image and likeness.” And Michael went out and called all the angels, saying, “Worship the image of the LORD God, as the LORD God has instructed.” (13:1–14:1)<sup>223</sup>

The devil responds to Michael’s command, “I will not worship one inferior and subsequent to me. I am prior to him in creation; before he was made, I was already made. He ought to worship me” (14:3).<sup>224</sup> Thus, in the *L.A.E.*, Adam is set up in the pre-fallen creation as the one who bears the image of God and whom the angels are consequently commanded to worship. The human, Adam, is the image that should be worshiped, not any of the angels, precisely because God created him in the divine image. If something like this tradition is assumed to underlie Heb 1–2, then the very contrast I have elucidated between the reigning, human Son and the worshiping, angelic spirits makes good sense.

To this point I would add that, in keeping with the Adam narrative Marcus identifies, the bestowal of divine glory upon humanity is a prominent theme in Heb 2. Not only is Jesus crowned with glory (2:9), he is also explicitly said to be responsible for leading many “sons” into glory (2:10). In view of the context of the ongoing contrast between the Son and the angels here, as well as the collocation of the mention of the Son’s glory and exaltation above the angels in Heb 1, there can be little doubt that the author considers the possession of this glory to be one of the key reasons for the promised elevation of humanity over the angelic spirits. Indeed, glory and relative standing within

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<sup>223</sup> M. D. Johnson, “Life of Adam and Eve: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:249–95, here 262.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

God's created order seem to be inextricably linked.<sup>225</sup> To be crowned with glory, in other words, is to assume a place in the created economy second only to God (cf. Heb 1:3).

Hebrews' use of Ps 8 therefore bears a remarkable resemblance to the Adam narrative attested in the *L.A.E.* As Marcus claims, the most likely explanation for this resemblance is that the author of Hebrews knows and employs a tradition about Adam very similar to the one narrated in the *L.A.E.* Furthermore, the reference to God commanding the angels to worship Adam and the pattern of events detailed in this section of the *L.A.E.* are strikingly similar to the logic of Heb 1:6. In the *L.A.E.* Adam is brought into the realm of God and the angels. Then God commands the angels to worship him.<sup>226</sup> The rationale for this command is evident. The angels are to worship Adam because he is the image of God (see also 14:1–2). In Heb 1:6 the Son, who is the full expression of God's glory/image (Heb 1:3), is also brought into the οἰκουμένη where God commands the angels to worship him.

The mention in the *L.A.E.* of Adam's being brought into the presence of God and the angels alludes to the biblical comment that Adam was created outside of Eden and

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<sup>225</sup> Along these lines in *L.A.E.* 16:3 the devil describes his banishment from heaven as his expulsion from his heavenly dwelling and glory.

<sup>226</sup> Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 42; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 98–100, argues that the motif of the angels worshiping Adam is attested at Qumran. He points to an apparent reference in 4Q381 fragment 1 lines 10–11 to the angels serving and ministering to Adam. The fragment seems to be about the creation of humanity. Unfortunately it is badly damaged. Someone's "hosts" are mentioned in line 10. This may suggest that angels are in the context. Yet, while the phrase about ministering and serving Adam in line 11 is clear, the reconstruction of "angels" (מלאכים) is uncertain. Nevertheless, Fletcher-Louis' interpretation makes a great deal of sense in light of the plain evidence in later texts that Adam was to be worshiped by the angels. Given the statement in Heb 1:14 that the angels are ministering spirits sent to serve those who are about to inherit salvation, the collocation of actions in the phrase "to serve Adam (לעבד ל' אדם) and to minister to him (ולשרתו)" is striking if, in fact, the subject of the two verbs is the angels.



then placed in the garden (Gen 2:8, see also *L.A.E.* 32:1).<sup>227</sup> This implies that Adam was brought into the realm of God and the angels with his human body. God blew into the earthen form the breath of life and Adam's countenance and likeness were made into God's image. It is this human being with his particular kind of embodiment who enters the realm of the angels and is declared to be the image of God whom they are to worship. Indeed, the idea that Adam has a particular kind of body may well be inherent in the notion that Adam is the *image* of God. Adam's kind of corporeality is plainly one of the elements of his existence that distinguishes him from the angels. Notably, the author of Hebrews stresses that the Son becomes blood and flesh (2:14) as part of the ongoing contrast between the Son and the angels (cf. 2:16).

The basic moves that the author of Hebrews makes to establish and explicate the place of the Son relative to that of the angels are clearly intelligible in view of some kind of tradition about Adam, the fall, and the devil. In fact, the presence of the angels in the argument of Hebrews comes into better focus when the influence of this tradition is recognized. The prominence of the status of humanity relative to that of the angels and of the idea of a division between the realm of God and the angels, on the one hand, and the status and realm of humanity after the fall, on the other, fits well within the larger argument regarding the Son's elevation in the οἰκουμένη where God and the angels dwell. That is to say, the author's eschatological vision that humanity will one day inherit

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<sup>227</sup> This idea is more clearly attested in *Jubilees*. There Adam is said to have remained in the land of his creation outside of the garden for forty days of purification. After this period of purification the angels brought him into Eden (cf. *Jub.* 3:9).

the οἰκουμένη and will be led into the glory of that realm by Jesus, the first human to be given dominion in that realm, makes a great deal of sense when foregrounded against the backdrop of the eschatological hopes of some Second Temple Jews for the repossession of the eternal inheritance that rightly belongs to Adam.

The fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham is nothing less than the inheritance of all the glory of Adam. God's people, the seed of Abraham (Heb 2:16), will one day assume their rightful place above the angels and live forever in the presence of God. In short, the hope the writer holds out to his readers appears to be the hope of the restoration of the human being to the position and status of Adam before the fall.

If this larger vision accurately depicts the eschatology of the author, then the story of Adam may be seen to function as the conceptual paradigm for a link between the realm of heaven and the realm of this world. If he is depicting the elevation of Jesus in Adamic terms, then he would also be able to reestablish the connection between God and humanity lost when Adam lost his glory and was compelled to leave Eden and the presence of God. Jesus, that is, would serve in Heb 1–2 as a new Adam—the first human being to be fully and irreversibly elevated in the eternal οἰκουμένη, and given full dominion over all things, including the angels.<sup>228</sup> As such, he would also stand as the human representative who is in solidarity with his human brothers and sisters. The ambiguous genitive phrase “ἐξ ἑνός” does not by itself bear the weight of this

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<sup>228</sup> One of Marcus' conclusions regarding the Son of Man language in Jewish eschatology is that, “The connection between Adam and his ‘Son’ is the anthropological bridge over [an] otherwise unspannable eschatological chasm” (Marcus, “Son of Man,” 385).

suggestion. Yet, in view of the larger context of the argument and the similarities between the Adam narrative in the *L.A.E.* and the emphases in Heb 1–2, the conclusion of the argument in Heb 2 for the Son’s elevation above the angels provides further support for this claim. Significantly, as the writer brings his case for the contrast between the royal Son Jesus and the angelic spirits to a close, he specifies that the Son’s blood and flesh are part of the fundamental distinction between the Son and the angels. That is to say, as was the case with Adam, the Son’s human corporeality sets him apart from the angels.

#### ***2.5.3.2 The Measure of a Human: The Anthropology of Hebrews 2***

The writer nowhere offers an explicit, highly detailed anthropology. What he says about humanity in Heb 2, however, helps explain how humans, and Jesus in particular, are distinguished from the angels. He states in 2:14 that the Son became united with his siblings by partaking (μετέχω) of the blood and flesh that the children share. Put differently, Heb 2:14 specifies that because (ἐπεὶ οὖν) blood and flesh are constitutive of the children, the Son who leads them all into glory and declares his kinship with them before God and the angels also partakes of their blood and flesh. The Son, that is, could not be the representative of his brothers and sisters if he were not human like his brothers and sisters.

That this kind of corporeal participation in human nature stands at the heart of the contrast between the Son and the angels is already suggested by the writer’s emphasis on the angel’s spiritual constitution (1:7, 14). The angels are *spirits*; the Son is something different, and different in a way that qualifies him to reign over the οἰκουμένη. The

author's comment in 2:14 that the Son participates in blood and flesh and his further claim in 2:16 that the Son "plainly did not take up/help the angels (οὐ ... δῆπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται), but ... the seed of Abraham" further clarifies how the Son differs from the angelic spirits. Whatever the precise meaning of ἐπιλαμβάνομαι here,<sup>229</sup> the statement in 2:17 that the Son was made like his brothers "in every respect" (κατὰ πάντα) indicates, especially in light of 2:14, that the author identifies the Son's kind of physicality, his blood and flesh, as that which distinguishes him from the angelic spirits.

The importance of this sort of distinction between angelic spirits and human flesh and blood is found in other ancient Jewish texts. For example, *The Cave of Treasures* referenced above relates Satan's refusal to obey God's command to worship Adam as follows: "It would be proper that he [i.e., Adam] prostrate before me, for I am made of fire and spirit. I cannot prostrate before dust which is made from soil" (*Cav. Tr.* 2:14).<sup>230</sup> While much later than Hebrews, the allusion to the comment in Ps 104:4 that the angels consist of fire and wind/spirit (LXX 103:4, πνεῦμα; MT 104:4, פִּיֵּן) in this text is especially interesting. Satan's refusal to obey God's command to worship Adam is based on the fact that his angelic nature (fire and spirit) is superior to the kind of body that

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<sup>229</sup> The meaning of the term here has been debated. See the excellent survey of the history of the debate and the various translation options in Westcott, *Hebrews*, 55. According to Westcott, the early Fathers generally assumed that the word indicated the fact of the incarnation: the Son's taking up the nature of the seed of Abraham (i.e., a form of humanity) as opposed to taking up the nature of angels. Such a meaning would fit nicely with the larger argument of Heb 1–2. There is no evidence outside of this passage, however, to substantiate the idea that the word can bear this meaning. The word can, though, carry the connotation of helping and could be used absolutely with that sense (Westcott cites Sir 4:11). This latter meaning, which has been widely accepted in the modern period, fits the context equally well.

<sup>230</sup> Translation in Gary A. Anderson, "The Exaltation of Adam and the Fall of Satan," in *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays* (ed. Gary A. Anderson et al; SVTP 15; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 83–110, here 87.

Adam has. This text appeals to the same verse that the author of Hebrews has isolated (cf. Heb 1:7 and 14) to make a distinction remarkably similar to the one I have argued is so important for Hebrews—the difference between angels and humans—and it does so in the context of the divine command for angels to worship Adam. *The Cave of Treasures* describes human bodies in different terms (they consist of dust and soil—the stuff of the earth), but the larger point is basically the same as the one I argue is being made in Hebrews. That is, the issue here and in Hebrews is that angels are spirits whereas human bodies consist of flesh and blood. Moreover, *The Cave of Treasures* plainly links this contrast with the tradition about Adam, the devil, and the fall discussed above.

*The Cave of Treasures* is an early medieval text and cannot by itself be taken as evidence that these ideas existed in the first century C.E. Yet, the similarities between this text and Hebrews would seem to have only three possible explanations. First, this could be an amazing coincidence. The authors of these works may have independently used Ps 104:4 to highlight the contrast between the fiery nature of the angelic spirits and the kind of bodies that human beings have in contexts where a human is being elevated above angels and angels are commanded to worship him. It could be that the author of Hebrews is not reflecting on an Adam tradition when he argues for the elevation of humanity over the angels and relates the divine command to the angels to worship an elevated human. Furthermore, *The Cave of Treasures* may randomly have linked Adam, angelic worship of Adam, the devil, and Ps 104:4. All of this is possible, but such explanations seem less plausible than the supposition of a common tradition in which these connections were already present.

Second, it could be that the *The Cave of Treasures* represents an early interpretation of Heb 2 and/or of texts and ideas derived from that portion of Hebrews. Notably, if this is the explanation, then the *The Cave of Treasures* offers proof that Hebrews was being read in the early medieval period along the very lines I have argued. That is to say, Heb 1–2 is the middle term that supplies the linkage of these motifs and texts and Adam because early medieval Christians saw the connections. Again, this is possible, but the broader context of Jewish reflection on Adam and the place of humanity long before the medieval period makes this unlikely.

Rather, the most likely explanation seems to be a third one: that the traditions attested in Hebrews and *The Cave of Treasures* both witness to a collocation of texts, individuals, and ideas associated with a narrative about Adam that predates and influences both works. That is to say, the logic and biblical argumentation regarding the elevation and angelic worship of Jesus likely depends upon a narrative about Adam similar to those attested in the *L.A.E.* and *The Cave of Treasures*. This is not to exclude other influences, nor to pass over the unique emphases of Hebrews. Rather, this conclusion provides an historical and cultural context within which the larger sweep of the argument of Heb 1–2 becomes intelligible. The contrast between the Son and the angels in Heb 1–2 consists in the contrast between blood-and-flesh humanity as the image/glory of God, and the ministering spirits of fire who for a little while hold a place of authority above humanity, but who will be under human subjection, along with the rest of the οἰκουμένη, when humanity is fully restored to all the glory and dominion that Adam lost.

#### ***2.5.4 The Humanity of the Son in the Realm of the Angelic Spirits***

Thus the argument begun in Heb 1 culminates in Heb 2. As it unfolds, the author makes the claim that the crucial factor that qualifies the Son for his throne in the οἰκουμένη, and therefore enables his exaltation above the angels, is the fact that he is not a ministering spirit made of fire and wind, but a human being. To be more precise, the way the author employs and explicates Ps 8 indicates that it is the Son's humanity—his flesh and blood—that gives him the right to sit at God's right hand and reign over the other heavenly beings. No angelic spirit was ever invited to take the throne at God's right hand because no angelic spirit has flesh and blood.

From the discussion thus far it is apparent that one of the definitive distinctions between angelic beings and human beings is that human beings have bodies of flesh and blood. The fact that the Son had to take on such a body to become human suggests that flesh and blood are among the elements constitutive of humanity for this author. Exactly this point sheds light on the scene of the Son's heavenly enthronement described in 1:6. If, in keeping with the contrast between the royal Son and the angelic spirits developed in Hebrews' discussion of Ps 8 in chapter two, the Son is appointed to reign over the οἰκουμένη because of his humanity, then it is absolutely necessary that the Son have his humanity—his body of flesh and blood—with him when he ascends into heaven. Just as the human, flesh-and-blood Adam, the image of God, was to be worshiped when he was brought from earth into the presence of God and the angels, so the Son, the effulgence of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, is to be worshiped by the angels when God brought him into the οἰκουμένη.

To put the point differently, if the Son had left his flesh and blood on earth to return to the realm of the fiery heavenly spirits as only a spirit himself, he would have left behind his most important credential for dominion over the world to come—his humanity. The author’s Adamic anthropology and corresponding eschatological interpretation of Ps 8, in other words, clarify how and why the Son differs from the angels. The Son’s invitation to sit where no angel has ever been invited—his elevation in the οἰκουμένη to a royal status above the position of the ministering spirits—is explained by his humanity.

## **2.6 Conclusions**

The various elements of the preceding argument suggest that when the author contrasts the angelic spirits with the royal status of the Son in Heb 1, he relies upon the assumption that the key difference between the two is that of the humanity of the Son. The angels are spiritual beings. Humans are flesh-and-blood beings. The Son, therefore, has what the immortal spirits never will—a human body. In keeping with the author’s eschatological vision of a renewed creation and the promise he finds in Ps 8, the Son is elevated above the angelic spirits only because he too is a human being.

In light of the author’s Adamic anthropology, his emphasis on the Son’s humanity in Heb 2 is not, as is often assumed, designed to highlight the humiliation of the Son in contrast to his exaltation depicted in Heb 1. Rather, the thoroughgoing emphasis on the Son’s humanity *serves as the explanation* for how the Son became eligible to be exalted to the divine throne and receive the worship of the angels. Specifically, the Son became like his peers, the descendants of Adam and Abraham. Jesus’ ascension into heaven and



assumption of the heavenly throne can therefore be identified with the entry of God's people into the eternal promised land. Jesus, the ἀρχηγός, has crossed over the border and entered the inheritance. When God crowned him with glory and honor, he became the first human being to regain what Adam lost. Because the Son is a kind of second Adam to whom all things are subjected, God commands all the angels to worship him as he enters his rightful inheritance and takes his place on the throne promised to him.<sup>231</sup> Not only has he been elevated above all other humans, but those fiery spirits who dwell in God's presence in the heavenly οἰκουμένη and who are presently placed in authority over humanity (including the one who has the power of death), have now been subjected to the dominion of at least one human being—Jesus.<sup>232</sup> To put the point differently, to see Jesus, as the author says he and his audience now do (2:8; 12:2), is not to see the wilderness wandering per se, but to perceive the initiation of the ultimate possession of the inheritance. Hebrews has more of a new conquest emphasis at its rhetorical center than it does a new exodus motif.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> If the explanation of Heb 1–2 offered in this chapter is basically sound, it is worth noting that the idea that the author of Hebrews spends so much time here contrasting the Son and the angels because of some form of angel worship (see n. 5) on the part of the auditors could not be more wrong. If anything, it is the issue of the angels' worship of humans, not human worship of angels, that concerns him.

<sup>232</sup> While the angels who with flaming swords bar the way back into Eden are never explicitly mentioned in Hebrews, the logic that because Jesus is now exalted above the angels, his siblings may boldly approach God (4:16) and will one day follow the path that Jesus, their ἀρχηγός, has already blazed, is readily explained by the idea that, prior to the Son's elevation, the angels stood as mediators and gatekeepers between God and humanity.

<sup>233</sup> The one implies the other, but the focal point in Hebrews is not the present wandering/exodus, but the obedient movement forward into the inheritance—the conquest of the land. Recognizing this thrust further suggests that, insofar as it is helpful to categorize the rhetoric of Hebrews, the homily's rhetorical character is deliberative. This suggestion and the centrality of synkrisis in the work aligns well with Quintilian's comment that deliberative speech is often nothing more than comparison (*Inst.*, 3.8.34).

Already this argument hints at the presence and importance of Jesus' bodily resurrection for the Christology of Hebrews. That is to say, in order for the Son to be the one elevated to the heavenly throne at God's right hand, he had to have his humanity, i.e., his flesh and blood, with him in heaven. If he left the very constitutive elements of his humanity on earth to return to the heavenly realm as a spiritual being, a being like the angels who have no blood and flesh, he would have left behind the requisite qualifications he needed to be the one who could be elevated above the angels—his humanity. Yet, this implies that when the author confesses that, after his death, Jesus ascended into heaven, he likely thinks in terms of Jesus taking his flesh and blood into heaven with him. Such a finding indicates that Jesus' bodily resurrection plays an important, if implicit, role in the argumentation of the homily. This conclusion, however, raises the interrelated questions of 1) how it is possible for human flesh and blood to dwell in heaven; and 2) how Jesus' resurrection might be significant for the high-priestly Christology of Hebrews. I address these questions in the following chapter.

### 3. JESUS' RESURRECTION, ASCENSION, AND HEAVENLY HIGH PREISTHOOD IN HEBREWS

#### 3.1 Introduction

I argued in the previous chapter for the importance of the Son's humanity—in particular his flesh and blood—as one of the central elements in the contrast between the Son and the angels developed by the author in Heb 1–2. I suggested that the Son's humanity is the crucial factor in his being invited to sit on the heavenly throne at God's right hand, a throne that no angelic *spirit* has ever been offered. The author's interpretation of Ps 8 and implicit appeal to a tradition about Adam's original glory undergird this claim. Only as an ἄνθρωπος, he argues, can the Son rule at God's right hand. The Son, therefore, takes his rightful place at God's right hand and is worshiped by the angelic inhabitants of that domain because, as the first human being to have been brought into the fullness of God's promised οἰκουμένη, he *is* the effulgence of God's glory and the full representation of his being.

Such an argument implies that when the Son was brought again into the οἰκουμένη, he entered that realm *as a human being*. If the Son returned to the heavenly realms without his humanity—his flesh and blood—he would have had no more right to be appointed to rule over the οἰκουμένη to come than do the angelic spirits. When viewed against the backdrop of the writer's plain confession that Jesus suffered and died, such an argument appears to rely heavily upon a belief in the *resurrection* and *ascension* into heaven of Jesus' human body.

If the preceding account of the argument of Heb 1–2 grasps the basic line of reasoning in the opening portion of the homily, then two distinct but interrelated concerns must be addressed. Would a late Second Temple/early Common Era Jew like the author of Hebrews be likely to imagine the entry of a human body into heaven? An ontological dualism between humans and angels pervades the cosmological conceptions attested in ancient sources of the period, whether more generally oriented in scope toward Jewish biblical sources/Mikra, toward Greco-Roman religions, or toward Greco-Roman philosophical interests. While there are varieties of dualisms in these different literary and social spheres, most texts that address the issue of human ascension find problematic the idea that a human body can enter, let alone dwell in, heaven.

Secondly, what about the much-noted paucity of reference to, and so also presumed lack of emphasis on, Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews? As was discussed in the first chapter of this study, Jesus' resurrection is often assumed to have been collapsed by the author into his conception of Jesus' ascension/exaltation. A few scholars have argued that the writer actually denies or suppresses this element of the early Christian proclamation about Jesus.

The present chapter attends to these two questions. I argue here that the author can envision the Son's human body entering and dwelling in heaven *because* he believes that Jesus rose again from the dead. Put differently, the author is likely to have assumed that after his death, Jesus was the first to experience the *better* resurrection (Heb 11:35) to a transformed—i.e., a glorified or perfected—human life. The body the Son has in heaven *is a human body* (he is not a ministering *spirit*), but it is no longer blood and flesh

subject to the destructive forces of corruption and death. Rather, it is a human body imbued with God's glory and with indestructible life. For the author of Hebrews, I suggest, Jesus' resurrection marks the point at which he came into possession of his glorified humanity—a human body fit to enter heaven and dwell in God's presence. With that glorified blood and flesh he ascended into heaven where he not only reigns, but also serves as the great high priest.

I lay out this thesis in three steps. First, I examine some relevant Second Temple and early Jewish traditions concerning human ascents into heaven. These ascension accounts show that the issue of how a human being (and especially a human body) could enter and remain in heaven was a prominent concern when depicting an ascent. The traditions of these traditions recognized that human bodies do not belong in the realm of the holy and fiery spirits. They therefore employ different strategies to deal with this problem.

Of particular note is the fact that bodily ascension *is* conceivable, especially in some early Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic texts. When this kind of ascension is envisioned, the strategy most often invoked to facilitate the entry of a human body into heaven is glorification. The body of the ascending human is made in some way fit to enter heaven and advance toward God's presence. Once glorified, not only can the individual often remain in God's presence, but his relationship to the angelic inhabitants of heaven changes. The glorified human commonly has a status above that of the angels. Glorification, therefore, appears in these accounts to function as the means for righteous humans finally to dwell in the presence of God and all the angels. The collocation of

these motifs (ascending human, glorification of the human body, change in status vis-à-vis the angels) and the internal logic that holds them together provide a fruitful parallel with the argument of Heb 1–2.<sup>1</sup> The presence of this pattern in Jewish literature roughly contemporary with Hebrews greatly increases the plausibility that the author could be arguing along similar lines. This becomes all the more certain if it can be demonstrated that the writer affirms and relies upon the confession of Jesus' resurrection.

Second, then, I address the relative silence in Hebrews regarding Jesus' resurrection. I examine explicit and implicit references in the homily both to resurrection in general and to Jesus' resurrection in particular. There is, I argue, substantive evidence in the text for the conclusion that the author confessed Jesus' resurrection. Moreover, he understood this to be an event distinct from Jesus' ascension and exaltation. While commentators rightly recognize the importance of the Son's heavenly existence for the argument of the homily, the full significance of Jesus' resurrection often goes unnoticed.

Third, I explicate the logical importance of the assumption of Jesus' resurrection for the high-priestly Christology presented by the author. Specifically, as the moment in which Jesus was made fit, as an ἄνθρωπος, to ascend into heaven and dwell in God's presence, the resurrection stands at the logical center of the high-priestly Christology he presents. Jesus' bodily resurrection not only enables Jesus to reign as the exalted Son at God's right hand, it also brings him into possession of one of the central qualifications

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<sup>1</sup> This study confirms the suggestion of Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse* (WUNT 2/142; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 202–11, that Jewish apocalyptic ascension accounts are significant for unpacking the logic and cosmology implicit in the argument in Heb 1–2.

required for him to become the great high priest in the order of Melchizedek—namely, an indestructible life. Far from being ignored or denied, Jesus’ resurrection is a *sine qua non* for the distinctive high-priestly Christology of Hebrews.

The affirmation of the resurrection of Jesus’ human body by the author of Hebrews is, therefore, both plausible (in terms of the kinds of concerns evident in some other Jewish traditions regarding humans who ascend into heaven), and logically necessary for the author’s high-priestly Christology.

### ***3.2 Humans, Angels, and Ascensions into Heaven***

In the preceding chapter Adam’s loss of the glory and status God intended for him and the promise of human restoration were shown to help explain the logic of the Son’s elevation above the angels and invitation to sit at God’s right hand. I noted that the writer’s emphasis on the contrast between human beings and angelic beings highlights the fact that the former, as descendants of Adam (ἐξ ἑνός, Heb 2:11), are beings embodied in flesh and blood. The Son, in leading God’s many “sons” into glory, had to become a descendant of Adam by becoming blood and flesh.

Given the often correlated issues of human mortality and ritual impurity,<sup>2</sup> Jews of the Second Temple period who were interested in how a human being might ascend into

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<sup>2</sup> The general link between the mortal body and cultural ideas of ritual pollution was a particular focus of Mary Douglas’ work (see esp., *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966]). In recent decades scholars have made similar observations concerning the particulars of Israelite religion, especially as portrayed in the Pentateuch (e.g., Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991], esp. 42–51 where, in his epitomization of the Priestly theology, he stresses the contrast between death/impurity and life/purity/holiness), but also during the periods of the Second Temple and early Judaism (e.g., Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism*

heaven would probably have wondered about how a human body could enter the presence of God and the deathless angels.<sup>3</sup> It seems *a priori* likely that active reflection regarding human ascension would include the question of how an individual actually entered heaven. In fact, Second Temple and early Jewish ascension traditions attest this concern insofar as they generally specify the mode of a person's ascent. In the survey that follows, special attention will be paid to the mode by which a person is envisioned as ascending into heaven. Three modes are identified: bodily ascent, ascent in a dream, and spiritual ascent/ascension without the human body. These three modes correlate remarkably well with instances of glorification. That is to say, the transformation of the ascending individual typically occurs when the individual ascends with his human body. Those who do not ascend with their bodies generally do not experience glorification. There are exceptions to these patterns, but, among texts roughly contemporary with Hebrews, glorification occurs primarily in instances where the individual's flesh-and-blood body is depicted as being taken up to heaven.

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*in the Study of Ancient Judaism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006]). These issues are discussed in greater detail in chapter four of this study.

<sup>3</sup> Alan F. Segal, while critiquing and qualifying the claim of the history of religions school concerning an *Urmensch* myth behind Jewish and Christian ascension accounts, observes, "It appears that all the mediation stories are somehow concerned with the contradiction between the evanescent and enduring, life and death, impermanent earthly existence and permanent heavenly reward" ("Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment," *ANRW* II, 23.2:1333–94, here 1341). The dualism here is too sharply posed for every ascension account. One might wonder how, in the context of Jewish apocalyptic, the correlated issues of purity/life/heaven and impurity/death/earth might alter the way in which the dualism between heaven/God and earth/humanity is perceived. But the inherent tension between heaven and earth he identifies does seem to be a central concern for ascension accounts.



I begin this discussion with a study of an ascension tradition about Moses, someone who also happens to play a prominent role in the near context of Heb 1–2 (cf. Heb 3:2–6). Intriguingly, a remarkable set of parallels between one Talmudic account of Moses’ ascension and the argument in the initial chapters of Hebrews can be identified. Though the Talmudic story is much later than Hebrews, the presence of common motifs in both accounts warrant a more detailed discussion of the latter in light of the former.

### ***3.2.1 Psalm 8:5, Angels, and Moses’ Ascension in Talmud Babli***

In *b. Shabbath* 88b–89a one finds a story of Moses’ ascension into heaven to receive the Law. Just prior to the discussion of Moses’ ascent, a brief description is given of the souls of the people of Israel departing from them when God spoke to them from Mount Sinai. An early Palestinian Amora, R. Yehoshua b. Levi,<sup>4</sup> is said to have explained that, in response to this premature death, God “brought down the dew with which He will resurrect the dead and revived [the people], as it is said, *Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, Thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary*” (Ps 68:10).<sup>5</sup> R. Yehoshua b. Levi is also supposed to have said that, “At every single word which went forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, the Israelites retreated twelve *mil* [from the mountain], but the ministering angels [מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת] led them

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<sup>4</sup> H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger locate R. Yehoshua b. Levi in Lydda during the first half of the third century. He is therefore among the first generation of Palestinian Amoraim (H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* [trans. Marcus Bockmuehl; 2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 84).

<sup>5</sup> All citations are from the Soncino edition.

back.” He then proceeds with an account of Moses’ receipt of the Law by way of entering the cloud on Sinai and ascending into heaven.

According to R. Yehoshuah, this momentous ascension prompts the “ministering angels” to complain to God, “Sovereign of the Universe! What business has one born of a woman amongst us?” God replies that Moses has come into heaven to receive the Torah. This revelation causes the angels to exclaim, “That secret treasure . . . Thou desirest to give to flesh and blood! *What is man, that thou art mindful of him, And the son of man that thou visitest him?*” In the face of this angelic challenge, God spreads his glory around Moses. He then commands Moses to grasp the throne and answer the angels in his own defense. This Moses does and the angels relent. They even come to love Moses and begin to tell him their secrets. Of particular note, the Angel of Death tells Moses his secret. As a result, Moses is able to prevent him from killing all the Israelites when they grumble after Korah’s rebellion (cf. Num 17:46–50).

That some rabbis linked Ps 8:5 with Moses and a belief in his ascension into heaven is intriguing. In this account Ps 8:5 attests the tension between the human sphere of ritual impurity, corruptibility, and death; and the angelic sphere of holiness, fire, divine service, and life.<sup>6</sup> The angels here cite Ps 8:5 in disbelief that God would show concern for a mortal creature (one born of a woman, a being of flesh and blood) by sharing the heavenly treasure of the Torah with him. Moreover, the account of angelic hostility toward Moses in this story implies that the angels have a problem with his ascension.

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<sup>6</sup> This connection mirrors other rabbinic accounts that associate Ps 8:5 with angelic surprise/hostility toward the creation of Adam (e.g., *b. Sanh.* 38b; *Gen. Rab.* 8:5–6).

Flesh and blood have no business being in heaven. God's solution to this angelic challenge is to wrap Moses in his own glory, have Moses advance to grasp the heavenly throne, and command him to defend himself. Mortal Moses, in other words, must be protected from the angels, and God's extension of his glory to Moses provides that protection.

The use of Ps 8:5 in the midst of these sorts of concerns is intriguing in view of Hebrews' appeal to Ps 8 to sort out the relationship between humanity and the angels. The presence of this anecdote in the *Talmud Babli* puts its *terminus ad quem* relatively late (between the fifth and seventh centuries C.E.).<sup>7</sup> Even if the attribution to R. Yehoshua b. Levi is accurate, the tradition could only be pushed back into Palestine during the first half of the third century. Such a late date for the Talmudic story might suggest that it holds little value for understanding how Hebrews uses Ps 8. Nevertheless, a closer examination of this account and Hebrew's argument for the Son's elevation above the angels suggests some remarkable points of correspondence. After laying out these points I will turn to address the question of the possible antiquity of a tradition of Moses' ascension in more detail.

### ***3.2.1.1 Moses' Ascension in Talmud Babli and Hebrews 1–2***

Several elements of Hebrews' opening argument for the Son's heavenly exaltation have parallels in the *b. Shabbat*'s account of Moses' heavenly ascent. First, it is

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<sup>7</sup> This assumes, as is generally accepted, a final edit during the time of the anonymous stammaim (see Catherine Hezser, "Classical Rabbinic Literature," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* [ed. Martin Goodman; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002] 115–40, here 129–30).

interesting that Hebrews twice identifies the angels as “ministering spirits” (cf. 1:7, 14). The Talmudic story shares this conception of who and what angels are—they are spirits who serve as God’s heavenly priests. The ubiquity of this understanding of angels in many Second Temple and early Jewish texts makes its presence in Hebrews and *b. Shabb.* 88b–89a unsurprising.<sup>8</sup> By itself this common nomenclature can only be considered a parallel with Hebrews in the broadest sense.

Second, the ministering angels in the Talmudic account are sent to the aid of the Israelites at Sinai when God gives the Law to confirm his inheritance (Ps 68:10). Similarly, in Heb 1:14 the ministering spirits are sent to serve those who are about to inherit their salvation. Notably, the parenthetic interlude of Heb 2:1–4 makes reference to the very context in which the angels are thought to have come down to save the people and in which Moses ascended into heaven—that of the giving of the Law (Heb 2:2).

Third, the theme of God’s glory is important in similar ways both in Hebrews and in this account of Moses’ ascension. The Son is identified in 1:3 as the one who is the radiance of God’s glory (ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης). Jesus’ exalted position in 2:9 is correlated with his being crowned with glory, and in 2:10 he leads many children into glory. More interesting, though, is the way in which the Son’s elevation above the angels in Hebrews correlates with his being glorified. In Heb 1:3–4 the Son’s possession of

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<sup>8</sup> Already in the biblical text the angels are depicted as God’s ministers (משרתי/ λειτουργοὶ αὐτοῦ), those who do his will (Ps 103:20–21). At Qumran angels are apparently called משרתי in the presence of the holy king in the inner sanctum of his glorious sanctuary (e.g., 4Q400 1i4, 8; cf. Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* [HSS 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985], 26, 89). The depiction of a group of ministering angels is common in rabbinic texts (e.g., *Sipre* 306, 339; cf. Str-B 3:680 for instances where the “ministering angels” are identified as a particular class of angels).

God's glory is linked with his assumption of the heavenly throne and thus also with his exaltation above the angels and receipt of a name that is greater than theirs. A similar logic appears to drive the author's comments in Heb 2:8–9 where Jesus is identified as the one who was for a little time made lower than the angels but has now been crowned (note the royal language) with glory. Jesus has been glorified and elevated to a position of royalty on the heavenly throne and therefore set above the angels, just as Heb 1:3–4 stated.

All of this is similar to the logic of the reversal of the relationship between Moses and the angels in *Talmud Babli*. In this account God's glory serves as the remedy that placates the anger of the angels toward the presence of flesh and blood in their holy realm. The wrapping of Moses' body in the divine glory serves to validate Moses' right to be in heaven. His ability to approach and to grasp God's throne appears to be predicated on first being surrounded by God's glory.

A fourth remarkable point of comparison between the Moses story and Hebrews is that both cite Ps 8:5. In the Talmudic account the angels are the ones who utter the verse in their astonishment that God would privilege a flesh-and-blood being so apparently inferior to them with access to heavenly things. The context in which Hebrews cites Ps 8:5 shares a concern for rightly ordering the relationship or status between humans and angels within the divine economy. The writer invokes Ps 8 to demonstrate that humans—not angels—will ultimately rule in the coming world (2:5), and the human Son has already assumed the rule of this realm by being elevated to the heavenly throne at God's right hand.

The singular way in which the Ps 8 citation is introduced in Hebrews (διεμαρτύρατο δὲ πού τις λέγων, “but somewhere someone is attested as saying”) may even, in view of the discussion of the Son’s elevation above the angels, be a subtle allusion to an angelic speaker. Angels are commonly attributed with mouthing the words of this verse in rabbinic texts.<sup>9</sup> While these texts are all later than Hebrews, it is noteworthy that no other biblical citation in Hebrews refers to the subject speaking the biblical words with the vague indefinite pronoun τις, “someone.”<sup>10</sup> Perhaps this unidentified “someone” indicates that the author of Hebrews also knew of traditions that placed this text in the mouths of angelic beings. One wonders, in other words, if this “someone” in Heb 2:6 may not be a veiled reference to an angelic speaker.

Fifth, all of these parallels exist within the larger context of a human being ascending into the heavenly realm. In Hebrews, Jesus ascends and is exalted to the throne above the angels. In *Talmud Babli*, Moses ascends, is wrapped in God’s glory, and then invited to approach the divine throne. From this elevated position he also appears to be privileged above the angels.

When taken together, the collocation of these motifs around a citation of Ps 8:5, with reference to an individual ascending into heaven, hints at the conclusion that in Heb 2 the author might be reworking a tradition about Moses ascending into heaven that relied

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<sup>9</sup> See examples in n. 6 above.

<sup>10</sup> God (e.g., 1:5–8, 13; 4:1; 5:5; 6:14; 11:18), Jesus (10:5–7), the Holy Spirit (3:7; 10:15), Moses (9:20; 12:21), and David (4:7) all speak the words of scripture. In each of these instances the speaker is either explicitly identified or clearly deduced from the context. There are some points where a citation is introduced generally (e.g., as “the exhortation” which addresses the audience, 12:5). Only here, however, does “someone” cite scripture.

upon several of the core elements plainly attested in the later Talmudic account of Moses' ascension. Four further observations from Heb 2–3 lend support to this hypothesis.

First, the author's citation of Ps 8:5–6 stands in close proximity to a reference to the angelic being sometimes identified in the Second Temple period as holding the power of death—i.e., the devil (2:14).<sup>11</sup> Moreover here, as with the Talmudic story about Moses, the human ascension correlates with this being's power over death being surrendered.

Second, both Hebrews and the *Talmud Babli* contrast humans as flesh and blood with the spiritual nature of the angels (Heb 1:7, 14; 2:14, 16, *b. Shabb.* 88b–89a). Third, given all the parallels just discussed, it is remarkable that immediately after the author of Hebrews explicates Ps 8 and Jesus' victory over the one who holds the power of death (2:5–3:1), his argument proceeds in 3:2–5 to address the question of the relationship between Jesus and Moses.<sup>12</sup> Fourth, the assumption that the author reworks a tradition about Moses ascending into heaven similar to the one attested in *Talmud Babli* provides a compelling rationale for one of the exegetical curiosities in the text of Hebrews—the deferral of the

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<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., *L.A.E.* 17:1. This conception is also attested in rabbinic literature (see evidence in Str-B 1:144–49).

<sup>12</sup> In addition, it may be significant that Ps 8:6 is twice taken in *Talmud Babli* as a reference to Moses as the one made a little lower than God and who is therefore above the angels. In *b. Rosh Hash.* 21b and *b. Ned.* 38a Moses is explicitly identified with Ps 8:6 as the one who was made a little lower than God. This tradition may underlie the account of Moses' ascension in *Pesiq. Rab.* 20.4 when the second angel, in response to God's reminder that the angels questioned him with Ps 8:5 when he created humanity, says he will go before Moses "as a disciple before his master." In any case, if the author of Hebrews also knows of readings of Ps 8:6 that identify the exalted figure with Moses, and if he reworks such an interpretation in order to replace Moses with Jesus, this might further help explain the strange fact that Jesus is not mentioned by name in the letter until the interpretation of Ps 8:6 in Heb 2:9.

explicit identification of the Son as *Jesus* in Heb 2:9.<sup>13</sup> This last point is worth exploring in more detail.

### 3.2.1.2 *Hebrews 2:9 and the Identification of the Son*

When the Son is finally named in Hebrews, the mention of that name is intentionally placed after both the predicate and the verb—τὸν δὲ βραχὺ τι παρ’ ἀγγέλους ἡλαττωμένον βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν. Commentators rightly note the effect of this construction. The name of the one who was made lower than the angels is withheld, apparently for dramatic purposes.<sup>14</sup> But why has the author taken so long to name the Son as Jesus; and why, when he finally does identify him as Jesus, does he do it in such a dramatic fashion?

In view of the evidence just presented, I propose that the revelation of Jesus’ name may have held an element of uncertainty and perhaps even surprise for the first audience. The remarkable collocation of parallels between the account of Moses’ ascension in *Talmud Babli* and the discussion of the Son’s entry into the heavenly realm allow the inference that a fairly coherent tradition about Moses’ ascension existed prior to and independently of both Hebrews and *Talmud Babli* (or R. Yehoshua b. Levi).

Assuming, for the moment, that some such tradition was in circulation among Jews in the

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<sup>13</sup> Jesus’ name is deferred several times in Hebrews (cf. 3:1; 6:20; 7:22; 12:2; 13:20). Heb 2:9 represents the first instance of this phenomenon and likely establishes the rhetorical paradigm employed in the other instances.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews”* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 109; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47A; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 48.



first century, one suspects that the original audience may well have wondered if they would hear the name *Moses* in Heb 2:9.<sup>15</sup>

One of the strengths of this theory is that it provides an explanation for the structure and logic of the argument at this point in Hebrews. Jesus' name has been intentionally withheld and then introduced with real rhetorical flourish because the writer has purposefully built up to the response he could count on his audience to begin to expect, only to make a dramatic reference to someone else. Moreover, as was pointed out above, if the writer has reworked a tradition about Moses and replaced him with Jesus, then it makes good sense for him to do exactly what he does do next—address the topic of Jesus' relationship to Moses (3:2–5). A discussion of Moses, in other words, is precisely what the audience could rightly expect after this kind of rhetorical move.

Thus, the hypothesis that a coherent tradition about Moses' ascension similar to the account attested in *Talmud Babli* was known to the author of Hebrews not only provides a good explanation for the presence of the collocation of several of the motifs found within the argument of Heb 1–2, it also coheres with the logical progression of the argument from the explication of the Son's elevation above the angels to a discussion of the Son's superiority to Moses. This hypothesis would obviously be strengthened considerably if evidence could be adduced for accounts of Moses' ascension into heaven in literature prior to or contemporary with Hebrews.

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<sup>15</sup> In addition to referring to the Son in Heb 1, the author mentions "the Lord" in 2:3. The audience would almost certainly have identified the Son and the the Lord as Jesus. Nevertheless, the rhetorical build up to the name of Jesus is effective. If the author deliberately plays upon a tradition about Moses ascending into heaven, the effect is only highlighted, even if the true identity of the Son is never in doubt.

### ***3.2.1.3 Moses' Ascension in Second Temple Literature***

The previous discussion suggests that core elements of a tradition known to some of the rabbis about Moses' ascension into heaven had already been drawn together before Hebrews was penned. Dependence on a tradition common to both Hebrews and the *Talmud Babli*, though, is not the only explanation for these observations. At least two others are possible. First, the apparent points of contact could be coincidental. The number of parallels, the citation of Ps 8:5, and the logic and progression of Hebrews' argument traced above, however, make some kind of genetic relationship more likely than random chance.

Second, the parallels could be the result of a response by some of the rabbis to the very point being made in Hebrews about Jesus; perhaps the core of the tradition in *Talmud Babli* stems from rabbinic polemic against early Christian accounts of Jesus' ascension like the one found in Hebrews. It could be that something like the reverse of the case for which I am arguing is true. Some of the rabbis may have co-opted a Christian tradition about Jesus' ascension and deliberately replaced him with Moses. While this is possible, two points make it less plausible than the existence of a tradition independent of and earlier than both of them. First, the assumption of such a tradition explains the logic and rhetoric of Hebrews so well, which points to a tradition pre-dating Hebrews. I have already spoken to this point above and will not belabor it here. I only wish to emphasize that, especially in light of the discussion of Moses in Heb 3, it seems more plausible to assume common dependence on an earlier tradition than to posit a rabbinic account about

Moses that developed from Hebrews' claims regarding Jesus' ascension and elevation above the angels.

Second, while the evidence for belief in Moses' ascension at Sinai as early as the first century C.E. is scant, it is not completely lacking. The *Exagoge* of Ezekiel, for example, was probably composed between the third and first centuries B.C.E.<sup>16</sup> In the existing fragment of this play, Ezekiel relates a curious dream that Moses has just before encountering the burning bush.<sup>17</sup> In the vision, Moses sees a great throne on Mt. Sinai reaching up to the folds of heaven. Upon approaching the throne, the exalted individual seated upon it gets up and gives Moses his crown and scepter. He then invites Moses to sit upon the throne. From this exalted position, Moses is able to see everything under the earth, on the earth, and above the heavens. Additionally, a great number of stars come and fall before Moses' knees and parade around in front of him like an army.

This vision places Moses halfway between heaven and earth. Unfortunately, if it once existed, the portion of the *Exagoge* likely to have recounted Moses' actual ascent of Sinai has not survived. This leaves the relationship between the proleptic vision and the retelling of the event itself unknown. Nevertheless, whatever Moses' position relative to heaven in the vision, the bestowal of the crown and scepter upon him, the invitation for him to sit upon the throne, and his ability from this vantage point to see all things including those that are above heaven suggest that a tradition of Moses ascending from Sinai into heaven and being offered dominion and reign on the heavenly throne was

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<sup>16</sup> Pierluigi Lanfranchi, *L'Exagoge d'Ezéchiel le Tragique: Introduction, Texte, Traduction et Commentaire* (SVTP 21; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 10.

<sup>17</sup> Ezek. Trag., 67–82.

circulating. It further seems likely that the reference to the stars falling before Moses alludes to the royal subjugation of all things (perhaps even angels?)<sup>18</sup> to this human being sitting upon God's throne.<sup>19</sup>

While less clear, the *L.A.B.* also hints at a tradition of Moses ascending into heaven to receive the Law. In *L.A.B.* 11:15 Moses enters the cloud where God is. There he sees the tree of life, the likenesses of the holy implements, and the pattern for the tabernacle. Then in 12:1, after having "been bathed with light that could not be gazed upon," he *descends* "to the place where the light of the sun and the moon are. The light of his face surpassed the splendor of the sun and the moon."<sup>20</sup> Thus the *L.A.B.* appears to conceive of Moses having left the realm of this world and having gone into heaven; that is, having gone to a realm *above* the place where the light of the sun and the moon are. From that place above the realm of the sun and the moon, he then *descends*. He brings with him a face that shines more brightly than the brightest lights of this lower realm, because it has been bathed in heavenly light.

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<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that in Ezek. Trag. 85–86 Raguel interprets the elevation of Moses in terms of his judging and leading mortals (βραβεύσεις καὶ καθήγησι βροτῶν).

<sup>19</sup> Crispin Fletcher-Louis thinks that 4Q473 speaks of Moses' ascension into heaven and deification ("4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology," *DSD* 3 [1996]: 236–52). This view depends largely on his reconstruction of the text and has not been widely adopted. James R. Davila refers to Fletcher-Louis' reconstruction of the text as "entirely possible" but also "entirely speculative" ("Heavenly Ascents in The Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment* [ed. Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam; 2 vol.; Leiden: Brill, 1999], 2:461–85, here 473). Phoebe Makiello's assessment is considerably less sanguine ("Was Moses Considered to be an Angel by Those at Qumran?," in *Moses in Biblical and Extra-biblical Traditions* [ed. Alex Graupner and Michael Wolter; BZAW 372; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007], 115–42, here 117–22).

<sup>20</sup> Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: With Latin Text and English Translation* (AGJU 31; 2 vol.; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1:110.

In addition, Josephus appears to know of traditions in which Moses ascended to God on Sinai and at the end of his life. In his *Antiquitates Judaicae* he writes that after Enoch had lived 365 years, “he departed to the divinity, hence nothing has been recorded concerning his death” (ἀνεχώρησε πρὸς τὸ θεῖον, ὅθεν οὐδὲ τελευτὴν αὐτοῦ ἀναγεγράφασι).<sup>21</sup> Given the comment that nothing is written about Enoch’s death, there can be little doubt that his “departing to the divinity” (ἀναχωρεῖν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον) is Josephus’ way of speaking of Enoch being taken into heaven. The collocation of ἀναχωρέω + πρὸς τὸ θεῖον occurs only two other times in Josephus’ works: *A.J.* III.96 and IV.326. In both cases this departing to God is contrasted with death, and in both cases it is predicated of Moses.

In *A.J.* III.95 Josephus, speaking about Moses’ 40-day sojourn on Sinai, says that some of the people grew afraid while Moses was gone. Some presumed he had been killed by an animal. Others thought that he πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀνακεχωρηκέναι.<sup>22</sup> The meaning of this “being taken up to the divinity” becomes clear when Josephus describes yet another group unperturbed by Moses’ long absence reasoning that Moses’ great virtue made it plausible for him τὸ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς αὐτὸν μεταστῆναι.<sup>23</sup> Whatever Josephus’ personal opinion on the matter, this comment suggests that he knows of a tradition of Moses being taken up by God while he was on Sinai.

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<sup>21</sup> *A.J.* I.85.

<sup>22</sup> *A.J.* III.96.

<sup>23</sup> *A.J.* III.97.

Similarly, as Josephus narrates Moses' departure in *A.J.* IV.326 he writes that a cloud came upon Moses and he disappeared in a certain valley. He goes on to add that Moses himself wrote of his own death in order to prevent people from assuming that his abundance of virtue meant that "he departed to the divinity" (πρὸς τὸ θεῖον αὐτὸν ἀναχωρήσαι).<sup>24</sup> Here Josephus' comment that Moses wrote about his own death to prevent suspicions that he never died suggests Josephus is aware of the belief that Moses, like Enoch, ascended to heaven instead of dying.

Philo also speaks of Moses in ways that indicate his knowledge of traditions in which Moses ascended into the heavenly realms. Alluding to Moses' entry into the thick darkness around Sinai, Philo says that when Moses entered the darkness where God was (Exod 20:21), he passed into the invisible realm of the paradigmatic essence of existing things.<sup>25</sup> Again, when he discusses God's call to Moses to ascend Sinai in Exod 24:12 ("Come up to me on the mountain, and be there"), he comments, "This signifies that a holy soul is divinized by ascending not to the air or the ether or to heaven (which is) higher than all but to (a region) above the heavens. And beyond the world there is no place but God."<sup>26</sup> At another place, in a clear allusion to Sinai, he says that Moses was without his body (ἄσώματος γενόμενος) for forty days and nights while he fed on the music of heaven.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *A.J.* IV.326.

<sup>25</sup> *Mos.* I.158, *Mut.* 7.

<sup>26</sup> *QE* II.40 (LCL).

<sup>27</sup> *Somn.* 1.36.

Like Josephus, Philo also links Moses with Enoch. He explains that the statement in Gen 5:24 that Enoch could not be found means that Enoch was translated “from a sensible and visible place to an incorporeal (εἰς ἀσώματον) and intelligible form.”<sup>28</sup> He immediately adds, “This gift the protoprophet also obtained, for no one knew his burial place. And still another, Elijah, followed him on high from earth to heaven at the appearance of the divine countenance, or, it would be more proper and correct to say, he ascended.”<sup>29</sup>

Texts like these<sup>30</sup> provide good evidence that Philo knew of traditions in which Moses was thought to have ascended into heaven. In keeping with his Platonic cosmology, he has transposed these traditions into a philosophical key. Thus, instead of an ascension that involves their human bodies entering the divine realm, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah are all translated from the visible realm of this world into the invisible realm of the forms and then apparently absorbed back into God. These figures therefore become paradigmatic for the flight of the holy soul back to God (though for them this flight occurred before death, not after it).<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, when taken together with the evidence of Josephus and the *Exagogue*, Philo’s philosophical gloss on Moses’ experience on Sinai and his final disappearance as times when he entered the realm of being are probably rooted in older exegetical traditions regarding Moses’ ascension into heaven.

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<sup>28</sup> *QG* I.86 (LCL).

<sup>29</sup> *QG* I.86 (LCL).

<sup>30</sup>For more detailed discussions of the texts from Philo just referenced as well as of other passages, see Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (SNT 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 111, 122–25.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *QG* I.85.

The Second Temple evidence just surveyed leaves little doubt that stories about Moses ascending into heaven circulated before Hebrews was written.<sup>32</sup> While none of these glimpses of such traditions contain the full collocation of elements found in both Hebrews and *b. Shabbath*, the existence of the parallels between these two texts and the evidence that some Jews of the Second Temple period *did* believe that Moses ascended to heaven point to the likelihood that the particular structure of the story in *Talmud Babli* and probably the collocation with Sinai, the angels, and Ps 8 was circulating in the first century C.E.

#### ***3.2.1.4 Hebrews and Moses' Ascension: Some Tentative Conclusions***

I have argued above that the core of a tradition about Moses' ascension into heaven attested in the *Talmud Babli* was in circulation by at least the first century C.E. Further, some form of this tradition was likely utilized by the author of Hebrews to argue that *Jesus* is the human being who has ascended into heaven, who now sits on the divine throne, and to whom the angels (including the devil—the spiritual being who holds the power of death) have been subjected. This hypothesis nicely explains a number of striking parallels between the Talmudic account and the first two chapters of Hebrews.

More significantly, however, this theory provides an explanation not only for the deferred reference to the name of Jesus in the book of Hebrews, but also for the logic and progression of the argument in the first three chapters of the homily. It is not simply the

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<sup>32</sup> Evidence from shortly after the destruction of the Second Temple also exists (e.g., *2 Bar.* 59:3–11).



collocation of the elements constitutive of the tradition that matter. It is also the fact that these elements make very similar points in both cases.

In the story attributed to R. Yehoshua b. Levi, Moses' humanity hobbles his entry into heaven. In particular, the pure angelic spirits, quoting Ps 8:5, challenge his presence before God. Only after Moses has been surrounded by God's glory can he approach God's throne and compel the angels to show him deference. As a result he learns how to keep the angel of death at bay.

In a similar way, the mysterious Son in Hebrews is identified as the one who radiates God's glory, takes his place on the divine throne, and is elevated above the angels. This individual is only later revealed to be Jesus. The Son became the human being Jesus, and as such he was lower than the angels but then exalted to the throne above them. Jesus is also the one who, like Moses, has gained power and authority over the devil, the spiritual being who holds the power of death. If the author and the audience were familiar with a tradition in which these elements and this basic logic were linked with Moses' ascent into heaven, then the dramatic revelation of Jesus' name makes good sense. The audience could, at this point in the sermon, really be wondering who the actual subject of the homily was going to turn out to be. Moreover, even if they were almost certain it would ultimately be Jesus, the rhetorical effect of the reveal would grab their attention. Jesus' elevation above the angels also fits with this supposition. Like Moses, he ascended as a human being, was crowned with God's glory, and was invited to approach the throne. Further, it follows that immediately after this discussion, the author would then go on to stress that Jesus is greater than Moses.

This assessment further corroborates the argument of chapter two of this study. Both the tradition of Moses' ascension and Hebrews' discussion of Jesus' elevation above the angels highlight the contrast between the spiritual nature of the angels and the flesh-and-blood nature of humanity. This suggests that one of the primary problems lurking just below the surface of Hebrews' argument is the question of how flesh and blood can enter the heavenly realms. It likely follows that one of the central concerns underlying the discussion of Jesus' ascension and exaltation in the presence of God and all the angels would have been how Jesus' humanity—his flesh-and-blood body—was made fit to enter that realm. The tradition of Moses' ascent resolves this tension between the realm of the spiritual angels and that of the flesh-and-blood body by appealing to the glory of God. God wraps his glory around Moses and then bids him to approach his throne. Only then do the angels recognize his right to be among them. Only then do they defer to him. A similar move occurs in Hebrews. The Son shines with God's glory, sits on the throne, and has been exalted above the angels (Heb 1:3–4).

### ***3.2.1.5 Summary: Glory, Moses' Body in Heaven, and Hebrews***

I have argued that similar issues surrounding the relationship between an ascending person and the angels, the role of God's glory, and appeals to Ps 8 are evident in both the Talmudic account of Moses' ascent and Hebrews' discussion of the ascended Jesus. This suggests first that the author of Hebrews knows and utilizes a tradition about Moses similar to the account of it given in *b.Shabbat*. Second, however, this tradition about Moses indicates not only that early Judaism could imagine human bodies ascending to heaven, but that, at least in the case of Moses, the application of God's glory to the

human body correlates with changes in the individual's proximity to God's throne and relationship with the angels. A brief discussion of other, demonstrably earlier, ascension traditions indicates that in the late Second Temple and early Common Eras, some traditions of these traditions were concerned with highly analogous sets of issues. The fact that these issues are prominent in the opening chapters of Hebrews further supports the conclusion that the author conceives of Jesus' ascension in terms of his human body entering heaven.

### ***3.2.2 Additional Second Temple and Early Common Era Ascension Accounts***

Many of the Second Temple and early Common Era accounts of human ascents belong to a coherent subgenre of Jewish apocalyptic literature.<sup>33</sup> Formally, Hebrews shares little with the paradigmatic examples of this subgenre.<sup>34</sup> There are a few points of similarity: in Hebrews Jesus ascends through *the heavens* (which may imply levels of heaven), there is a tabernacle/temple there, angels are present as ministers/priests, Jesus serves in priestly capacity, the heavenly throne is prominent, and the glory of God is an important motif.<sup>35</sup> Hebrews, however, lacks the first person narrative presentation, the ubiquitous angelic guide, the detailed tour and description of the various levels of heaven,

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<sup>33</sup> See esp. John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 1–20. Apocalyptic texts that have an otherworldly journey were classed by the Apocalypse Group of the SBL's Genres Project as Type II (as opposed to those without such a journey—Type I; see, 13–15).

<sup>34</sup> The form critical study of apocalyptic ascension accounts by Mary Dean-Otting (*Heavenly Journeys: A Study of the Motif in Jewish Literature* [Judentum und Umwelt 8; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984]) nicely catalogs motifs commonly found in this genre (e.g., a pre-ascension setting, a lament, an angelic guide, visions of mountains, a temple in heaven, first person narrative, vision of God, disclosure of mysteries; see esp. 262–90).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* On the presence of God's throne in the heavenly temple see Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 16–20.

and the revelatory messages usually associated with this genre.<sup>36</sup> Yet, the mention in some of these texts of the ascending individual's glorification, change in proximity to God's throne, and change in status vis-à-vis the angels suggest the possible value of these accounts for understanding Hebrews.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.2.2.1 *The Varieties of Ascension Experience*

Ascension accounts from Jewish apocalyptic circles and from the larger Greco-Roman culture generally affirm some kind of significant cosmological divide between heaven and earth. Heaven is the realm of God and the holy and pure spirits/gods. The earth is the realm of corruptible flesh and blood. Unsurprisingly, Greco-Roman accounts consistently tend to envision humans who enter the higher realms as doing so *without*

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<sup>36</sup> Intriguingly, the affirmation that God now speaks in these "last days" through a Son who dwells in heaven (1:2) might provide a possible point of correspondence to the apocalyptic/revelatory element often found in ascension literature. The true nature of the penultimate period ("last days," 1:2; and, "today," 4:7) as a time of suffering/testing to be endured in order to obtain the inheritance is revealed to those who understand God's word in terms of the exalted Christ.

<sup>37</sup> Himmelfarb argues that ascension apocalypses "are shaped in important ways by the belief that human beings can become the equals of the angels" (*Ascent to Heaven*, 4). This, she argues, explains why the Seer's attainment of angelic status is such a "central" part of this literature (*Ibid.*, 7). Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), also argues that ascending humans become angels and that early Christology, including that of the argument for Jesus' elevation above the angels in Hebrews, was likely influenced by the association of Jesus with the highest angel (see esp. 111–113). The larger argument of this study suggests that the glorification of the ascending human does not always, even in some of the texts Himmelfarb and Rowland point to, imply that humans become angels. This is one option, but some texts seem to assume that there continues to be a distinction between a human in heaven and the angels, even though the human is in some ways very much like the angels. The argument in chapter two of this study indicates that the author of Hebrews thinks in terms of a distinction between exalted humanity and the angelic spirits. One of the effects of Hebrews' emphasis on Jesus' elevation above the angels is, therefore, to mark out a clear ontological distinction between the exalted human Son and the angels. Whether or not this effect allows the conclusion that the author worried that some in his audience were confusing Jesus with an exalted angel (so Rowland [citing Otto Michel], 112), is another matter entirely. If, as seems likely, Melchizedek is thought to be an angelic being (see my discussion of this topic in section 3.5.2.1.2), then the close comparison between Jesus and Melchizedek belies the notion that a worry about confusing Jesus with an angel was a great concern on the part of the author.

their flesh-and-blood bodies.<sup>38</sup> Within the category of Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature bodiless ascensions are also common. Dreams and visions are frequently employed modes of ascent. Similarly, one's spirit can be taken out of one's human body, perhaps as a postmortem experience,<sup>39</sup> but most often as a means of facilitating a temporary sojourn in the heavenly realms while one is still alive (e.g., Isaiah in *Ascension of Isaiah*,<sup>40</sup> John in Revelation<sup>41</sup>).

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<sup>38</sup> See evidence and discussion in, e.g., N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 55–60. There are exceptions to this tendency. See, for example, the story of Aristaeus of Proconnesus, whose corpse disappeared from the woodshed where it was being kept and who subsequently appeared to people at various times (so Herodotus, *Hist.* 4.14–15); and the story about Cleomedes of Astypalaea who, after killing some children, hid in a chest in the temple of Athena, disappeared, and was said to be no longer mortal by the Pythian priestesses (Pausanias, *Descr.*, 6.9.6–9). The uncertain circumstances surrounding the death of Apollonius helped foster the view that he ascended into heaven. Among the many stories of his death was one that when he entered the temple of Athena in Lindus, he disappeared in the inner shrine to the sound of voices calling “στειχε γὰρ, στειχε εἰς οὐρανόν, στειχε” (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.*, 8.30). Plutarch scoffs at such notions. He attributes the origin of the belief that Romulus ascended into heaven bodily to a story concocted by the political leaders (οἱ δυνατοί) to calm the masses after he disappeared in a great storm (*Rom.*, 27.6–7). Plutarch comments, “[M]any such fables are told by writers who improbably ascribe divinity to the mortal features in human nature, as well as to the divine. At any rate, to reject entirely the divinity of human virtue, were impious and base; but to mix heaven with earth is foolish” (*Rom.*, 28.6; translation from Plutarch, *Lives* [trans. Bernadotte Perrin; LCL 46; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1914], 181). A portion of the human being comes from the gods, Plutarch adds, “and to them it returns, not with its body, but only when it is most completely separated and set free from the body, and becomes altogether pure, fleshless, and undefiled” (*Rom.* 28.7; *Lives*, 181). He goes on to chide, “We must not, therefore, violate nature by sending the bodies of good men with their souls to heaven, but implicitly believe that their virtues and their souls, in accordance with nature and divine justice, ascend from men to heroes, from heroes to demi-gods, and from demi-gods, after they have been made pure and holy ... to gods” (*Rom.* 28.8; *Lives*, 183; cf. Ovid’s account of Romulus’ ascension, *Metam.* 14.824–29). Plutarch’s comments nicely epitomize the trend noted at the beginning of this note, but also prove that some people thought Romulus took his body to heaven.

<sup>39</sup> This is perhaps the case in the text known as the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* (so Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993], 52). The fragmentary depiction of a burial at the beginning of the Akhmimic text may introduce the account as the burial of Zephaniah. Such an introduction might suggest that the larger account was similar to Plato’s Myth of Er.

<sup>40</sup> *Ascen. Isa.* 6:10–12.

<sup>41</sup> In Rev 4:1 John looks and sees a door standing open in heaven. A voice then calls to him and commands him, “Come up here (ἀνάβα ὧδε), and I will show you what must happen after these things.” John recounts in 4:2, “Immediately I was in the spirit” (εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι). He then proceeds to relate the contents of the vision he saw in heaven. This language of being “ἐν πνεύματι” occurs three other times in Revelation (1:10; 17:3; 21:10). The exact clause ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι describes John’s state on

An assumed dualism between heaven and earth likely stands behind these spiritual ascensions. That is to say, the issue of the status of the flesh-and-blood body of the ascending individual is addressed simply by leaving that body where it belongs—on earth. Notably, in the Jewish and early Christian texts where the human body stays behind, there is a remarkable paucity of reference to the glorification of the ascending individual (e.g., the accounts of Enoch’s ascents in the Book of the Watchers [*1 En.* 1–36], and in Enoch’s Dream Visions [*1 En.* 83–90], and Baruch in *3 Baruch*).<sup>42</sup>

Of greater significance for this study, however, are accounts in Jewish apocalyptic texts of *bodily* ascensions into heaven. By way of contrast to visionary or spiritual ascents, accounts of human bodies ascending in which the whole person is actually depicted as entering heaven are often (though not always) accompanied by mention of the ascending person being glorified.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, there is usually some reference to that

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the Lord’s Day when he has his initial vision of one like the Son of Man (1:10). That John has a vision and receives a revelatory message suggests that his “being in the spirit” refers to some kind of a trancelike state (cf. David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* [WBC 52A; Dallas: Word Books, 1997], 82–83; and R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* [vol 1; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920], 22). The exact relation between spirit and body, though, is not clearly delineated. The uses of this terminology in 17:3 and 21:10, however, imply that the language of being “in the spirit” refers to an out-of-body experience. In both cases an angel carries the Seer “ἐν πνεύματι” to a particular location where he has another vision. The ἐν + dative construction clarifies that the angel did not lift John up and carry him around bodily. Rather, the angel *spirited* him away (i.e., carried John’s spirit from place to place).

<sup>42</sup> The Christian *Ascension of Isaiah* is a notable exception. Isaiah ascends spiritually but his spirit undergoes some glorification, not unlike that of Moses. Thus as he ascends his face is glorified (*Ascen. Isa.* 7:25). It is probably significant that Isaiah does not remain in heaven. Rather, a heavenly robe awaits his spirit after he dies and permanently leaves his earthly body behind (8:14–15; cf. 9:7–9).

<sup>43</sup> The story of Adam’s ascension in *L.A.E.* 25–29 is one clear exception. Significantly, though, he is not allowed to remain in heaven. Abraham’s journey in the *Testament of Abraham*, it should be noted, is not an exception to this pattern. Abraham clearly ascends bodily (*T. Ab.* 9:6), but he does not enter heaven proper. Instead, Abraham ascends into the ether of heaven (αἰθέριος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, 10:1; Greek text from Michael E. Stone, *The Testament of Abraham: The Greek Recensions* (Text and Translations Pseudepigrapha Series

person being elevated to a status higher than the angels. The sample is admittedly small, but the texts in which the ascending human is glorified also tend to emphasize the restoration of the human being to a place of glory in the created order.<sup>44</sup> The main example of this is found within the corpus of Enochic literature.

### ***3.2.2.2 Enoch's Bodily Ascension into Heaven?***

During the Second Temple period a prodigious amount of literature was produced relating to the biblical figure of Enoch. The text of *1 Enoch*, which exists in full form today only in Ethiopic, consists of several component parts. The Ethiopic text, a translation of a Greek *Vorlage*, has undergone a number of recensions and differs at points from the Aramaic fragments of the components of the book that have been discovered at Qumran (and from the extant Greek fragments).<sup>45</sup> It is not clear exactly when all the constituent parts began to circulate together, but it seems likely that all the parts had been produced by the beginning of the Common Era.<sup>46</sup> This brief account of the

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2; Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972). Only *after* Abraham dies, and his soul leaves his body, is he taken into heaven (εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, 20:12; cf. 7:9; 15:1).

<sup>44</sup> Himmelfarb astutely observes, “The standard assessment of the apocalypses as dualistic, pessimistic, and despairing of this world needs to be revised in light of the value the ascent apocalypses place on human beings” (*Ascent to Heaven*, 71).

<sup>45</sup> See Michael A. Knibb, “The Book of Enoch or Books of Enoch?: The Textual Evidence for 1 Enoch,” in *The Early Enoch Literature* (ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and John J. Collins; Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 121; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 21–40.

<sup>46</sup> The Book of Parables (*1 En.* 37–71) is the one element of the larger composition whose existence before the Common Era is disputed. No evidence of this portion of *1 Enoch* has been discovered at Qumran. Nevertheless, Nickelsburg points to “suggestive” evidence in the Book of the Parables that hints at events from the latter half of the first century B.C.E. (e.g., the end of chapter 56 and the Parthian invasion of Judea in 40 B.C.E.), and also notes the presence of parallel traditions in Wisdom and the Gospels as indicative of a date in the late first century B.C.E. or the early first century C.E. (*Jewish Literature*, 254–56). Loren T. Stuckenbruck further notes that the lack “of any overt response to Christian tradition, especially in relation

complexities of the transmission of this text suggests that particular details in the Ethiopic not attested in the Aramaic fragments must be appealed to with due caution. The main lines of the traditions about Enoch, however, are likely to have been a part of the religious ethos during the later part of the Second Temple period.

I noted above the likelihood that a tradition about Moses ascending into heaven existed as early as the first century C.E. and that different tradents may well have conceived of his ascension in different ways. The manifold accounts of Enoch's ascensions in the *1* and *2 Enoch* may provide analogous evidence for such a phenomenon. In any case, while *1 Enoch* contains accounts of Enoch ascending to heaven by way of visions, it also (along with *2 Enoch*) appears to contain depictions of Enoch ascending with his human body. I turn now to examine these accounts.

#### ***3.2.2.2.1 Bodily Ascension in 1 Enoch: The Book of the Parables***

The Book of the Parables (*1 En.* 37–71) is probably the latest portion of *1 Enoch* to have been composed. Given this fact, it is interesting to note that of all the component parts of *1 Enoch*, this portion has the most explicit account of Enoch's ascent and transformation.

The description of Enoch's ascent occurs in *1 En.* 39:3. In this verse Enoch ascends in a manner highly reminiscent of Elijah (cf. 2 Kgs 2:1,11; Sir 48:9, 12)—by being caught up from the earth in a whirlwind and set down in heaven. Like Elijah,

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to the 'Son of Man' figure" in the Book of Parables serves as the most significant evidence for an earlier date for the composition (*1 Enoch 91–108* [CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007], 116 n. 231).



Enoch seems to have been taken up into heaven with his human body. Once there he sees a vision (39:4), but notably this vision occurs *in heaven* and not, as in *The Book of the Watchers*, in a bed while he sleeps (cf. *1 En.* 13:7–14:2).

The vision language in this passage appears to highlight the revelatory nature of Enoch's experience and thus also to indicate that he sees in heaven the future state of the earth. Enoch observes the righteous and the angels dwelling together in the presence of someone identified as "the Chosen One" (39:4–7).<sup>47</sup> Enoch describes this place as if it were his own ultimate inheritance. He says in 39:8, "There I wished to dwell, and my spirit longed for that dwelling. There my portion has been from the first, for thus it has been established concerning me in the presence of the Lord of Spirits."<sup>48</sup>

The vision continues with Enoch speaking in bodily terms of his eyes looking at the place for a long time (39:10) and seeing those who never sleep (39:13). A curious thing happens next. In 39:14 Enoch says, "And my face was changed, for I was unable to see."<sup>49</sup> Immediately following this statement Enoch adds, "And after this I saw thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand—they were innumerable and incalculable—who were standing before the glory of the Lord of Spirits" (40:1).<sup>50</sup> These comments create the impression that Enoch's face had to be transformed in order for him to see the fullness of the realm in which he was standing. That is, Enoch's present, human condition in some way formed a barrier to his ability to comprehend the fullness of the

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<sup>47</sup> So George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 52.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 54

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

glorious realities of heaven. Some kind of transformation of his physicality had to occur for him to obtain to full access to the heavenly realm.<sup>51</sup>

Enoch's second parable says little about ascension.<sup>52</sup> Enoch does specify that the sinners, those who deny the name of the Lord of Spirits, will not ascend into heaven (45:1), but this appears to be a reference to what happens to them at death. Instead of entering heaven, they are kept somewhere between heaven and earth while they wait for the day of trial (45:2). In the parable Enoch appears to speak in God's voice as the text states, "On that day, my Chosen One will sit on the throne of glory" (45:3a).<sup>53</sup> "That day" is further described as the day in which the Chosen One will dwell among the righteous, "and I shall transform heaven and make it a blessing and a light forever; and I shall transform the earth and make it a blessing. And my chosen ones I shall make to dwell upon it" (45:4b–5a).<sup>54</sup> The righteous are further described as dwelling in God's presence, while the wicked are eradicated from the earth (45:6; cf. 51:1–5). That period is also described as one in which "a change will occur for the holy and the chosen and the light of days will dwell upon them, and glory and honor will return to the holy" (50:1).<sup>55</sup>

While little is said about Enoch's ascension, this passage is nonetheless interesting because it suggests that the present divide between the realm of humanity and

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<sup>51</sup> The reference to the transformation of Enoch's face likely alludes to Moses. If so, this detail would suggest that Enoch's ascension at least partially relies upon a tradition about Moses ascending to heaven. Given the links seen above in Josephus and Philo between Moses and Enoch, such dependence would not be surprising. The possible reuse of a Moses tradition by the author of Hebrews may, that is, have been anticipated by the Enochic literature.

<sup>52</sup> Though see the retrospective reference to the whirlwind and the location of the visions (i.e., heaven) in *1 En.* 52:1.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

the realm of the heavenly beings will one day disappear. This “day” correlates with the Chosen One being glorified and elevated to the throne of glory (cf. 49:2–4; 51:3), and heaven and earth being transformed so that all is in light for eternity. The point seems to be that the Chosen One, righteous humans, the present heaven, and the present earth will undergo a transformation by being united with God’s glory and allowed to dwell in God’s presence forever. On “that day” will come the final judgment and sinners will not be able to dwell on that transformed earth (45:5–6) in the glory and presence of God (50:4; 53:2; 55:4).

In keeping with the message of the second parable, the third begins with the promise that the righteous will inherit glory, eternal light, and everlasting life (58:1–6). The coronation of the Chosen One again finds explicit mention. Enoch tells of the Lord of Spirits placing the Chosen One upon the throne of glory at which point all the host of heaven and all flesh begin to worship that One (61:6–12). This moment is also depicted as a moment of judgment for the unrighteous (62:1–8; cf. 69:27). Moreover, in this vision the Chosen One is plainly identified as the son of man (61:5–8). Of additional interest is the account of the death and transformation of the righteous given in this third parable.

In *1 En.* 62:15–16 that day of transformation is described as one in which “the righteous and the chosen will have arisen from the earth ... and have put on the garment of glory” (62:15).<sup>56</sup> The righteous are further told, “And this will be your garment, the garment of life from the Lord of Spirits; and your garments will not wear out, and your

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

glory will not fade in the presence of the Lord of Spirits” (62:15).<sup>57</sup> Later, as Enoch hears Michael recount the names and sins of the fallen angels and the ways they led the angelic and human offspring astray, he learns that originally “humans were not created to be different from the angels, so that they should remain pure and righteous. And death, which ruins everything, would not have laid its hand on them” (69:11a).<sup>58</sup> The parable ends with a promise that connects the revelation of the name of the son of man with his assumption of the throne of glory (69:26–27). The motif of the judgment of the wicked is then mentioned, followed by the promise that, “[F]rom then on there will be nothing corruptible; for that son of man has appeared. And he has sat down on the throne of his glory” (69:29a).<sup>59</sup>

The third parable says even less about ascension than the second. Again, however, the main point of interest for this study concerns the divide between humans and angels and the discussion of the transformation of corruptible realities into incorruptible ones. Humans, the text says, were not originally subject to death. In this respect they were originally like the angels. They were led astray by the temptation to gain knowledge.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 89. It would not be accurate to think in terms of the *body* per se as the fundamental ontological distinction between humans and angels. That is to say, 69:5 speaks rather cryptically about “the children of the holy angels” ruining “their bodies through the daughters of men.” This might be a reference to the superhuman beings born as a result of the fallen watchers cohabiting with human women. Notably the account of Noah’s birth that occurs at the end of *1 Enoch* uses the language of “the sons of the angels of heaven” to describe the progeny of the watchers and human women (106:5–6, 12–14; cf. 7:2; 10:15). Yet, while this would explain how the angels have children and how these children have bodies, this interpretation is complicated by the fact that this verse speaks of a certain angel, Asbe’el, who led the children of the angels astray “so that they ruined their bodies through the daughters of men.” The distinction lies in the kind of bodies angels and humans have. Specifically, humans have bodies of flesh and blood while angels do not (cf. 15:3–7).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 92.

Because of this, they lost their purity and righteousness and fell under the destructive power of death. This situation, though, will be reversed when the son of man takes his throne. At that time the righteous will arise and put on new glorious garments of eternal life and dwell in a glorious new world where nothing is corruptible. The point seems to be that the resurrection will result in the restoration of humans to the pure and righteous state from which they fell and in their inheriting a glorified and incorruptible earth.

After this third parable comes a fairly detailed account of Enoch's final ascent into heaven. Here, in another apparent allusion to Elijah, Enoch is "raised on chariots of the wind" (70:2).<sup>60</sup> He first goes to the place where the righteous dead presently dwell (70:3–4). "After that," he recounts, "my spirit was taken away, and it ascended to heaven" (71:1),<sup>61</sup> and then to "the heaven of heavens" (71:5–6).<sup>62</sup>

It initially appears as if Enoch has ascended without his human body (71:1), but a few verses later a curious thing happens. Enoch, who is in the very presence of the Head of Days, says, "And I fell on my face, and all my flesh melted, and my spirit was transformed" (71:11).<sup>63</sup> Enoch's flesh has come with him, but it is not able to endure in God's presence. His fleshly body therefore melts away and he undergoes some kind of radical transformation. After this transformation, some exalted heavenly being approaches him and declares, "You are the son of man who was born for righteousness,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 93–94.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 94.

and righteousness dwells on you, and the righteousness of the Head of Days will not forsake you” (71:14).<sup>64</sup> The heavenly being adds that the Head of Days

proclaims peace to you in the name of the age that is to be ... and thus you will have it forever and forever and ever. And all will walk your path since righteousness will never forsake you; with you will be their dwelling and with you their lot, and from you they will not be separated forever and forever and ever. And thus there will be length of days with that son of man, and their will be peace for the righteous, and the path of truth for the righteous, in the name of the Lord of Spirits forever and ever. (71:15–17)<sup>65</sup>

The Book of Parables therefore ends with the revelation that Enoch is the son of man who will be given length of days, who will attain the throne of glory, and with whom the righteous will dwell forever in the age to come.

Enoch’s final ascension in this portion of *1 Enoch* occurs bodily—his flesh enters heaven. He is lifted up on chariots of the wind. Even the language of his “spirit” being taken from the lower realm of heaven up to the heaven of heavens does not seem to imply that his human body remains behind. This becomes clear when, in God’s presence, Enoch’s flesh melts away when his spirit is transformed. Moreover, after this transformation, which probably presents an image of what it will look like for the righteous to put on their glorious garments, Enoch is invited to sit upon the heavenly throne where he is to remain forever. Importantly, in his ascension and transformation, Enoch presents the pattern of glorification that awaits all the righteous. Notably too, in assuming his position as reigning son of man, this transformed Enoch becomes the object of angelic worship depicted earlier (see 61:5–12).

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

### 3.2.2.2 *Bodily Ascension in 2 Enoch*

The document known as *2 Enoch* likely dates from some point in the first century C.E. prior to the destruction of the temple.<sup>66</sup> Two basic recensions of the text exist today in Slavonic, one long and one short.<sup>67</sup> Nickelsburg and others note that neither of these recensions can claim to be closer to the original. Instead, it appears that the original text underwent expansions and contractions, though there are likely to be lengthy, secondary additions in the long recension.<sup>68</sup> F. I. Andersen therefore comments, “In the present state of our knowledge, the genuineness of any disputed passage is difficult to judge.”<sup>69</sup>

The versions of the text known today were transmitted by Christian scribes, but Nickelsburg points to two significant elements of the text that make Christian authorship unlikely. First, he notes that it would be strange for a Christian author to rewrite “the Enochic tradition so as to elevate the person of Enoch to the status of an angel, unique interpreter come from God’s presence, governor of the world, and central figure in God’s economy.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, it seems unlikely that a Christian author would portray Enoch in terms that one would expect to describe Jesus. Second, the discussion of Melchizedek “gives no indication that Jesus was his latter-day counterpart.”<sup>71</sup> In all

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<sup>66</sup> So, e. g., Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 225.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 221, though the picture is actually somewhat more complicated. See F. I. Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:91–221, here 92–94.

<sup>68</sup> So Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 221; Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” 94.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 225.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

likelihood, the text originated in a sectarian Jewish context during the late Second Temple period.

Granting Nickelsburg's arguments for the dating and general provenance of the document, the depiction of Enoch's ascent found therein bears special significance for this study. I here follow the translation of F. I. Andersen and largely limit my discussion to passages attested in both recension traditions. When a detail from a particular tradition is highlighted, then, in keeping with the nomenclature found in Andersen's translation, I refer to the short recension as [A] and the long recension as [J].

In 1:3 Enoch is lying on his bed asleep when two huge figures appear to him and call him by name. At this point Enoch wakes up and discovers the figures actually standing in the room (1:6). They inform him that he is going to ascend into heaven with them (1:8). After Enoch tells his family what is about to happen, the figures put him on their wings and carry him up to the first heaven (3:1). Then he is successively lifted to the second (7:1), third (8:1), fourth (11:1), fifth (18:1), sixth (19:1), and, finally, seventh (20:1) heaven.

In the seventh heaven Enoch sees God sitting on his throne, though he remains some distance away (20:3).<sup>72</sup> In keeping with the ontological dualism identified in *I Enoch*, Enoch here sees angels that are "fiery" and "incorporeal" (20:1; cf. 29:3, where angels are described as "bodiless"). All the heavenly armies are assembled before the divine throne. Enoch becomes terrified at this sight and falls on his face (21:2). God then

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<sup>72</sup> Tradition [J] locates God in the tenth heaven.



sends Gabriel [J] (Gabril [A]) to Enoch who takes him and stands him directly before the face of the LORD (21:3–6).

Enoch again falls on his face at the sight of God, and God commands Michael to bring Enoch up to stand amongst the angels who are before his face forever (22:7). Michael is then commanded to extract Enoch from his earthly clothing, anoint him with God's delightful oil, and put clothes of glory upon him (22:8–9). Once this is completed Enoch looks upon himself and realizes he "had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference" (22:10). That this language of earthly and glorious garments refers not to clothing per se, but to a transformation of Enoch's human body, is suggested by four factors.

First, the metaphor of the body as clothing was known in the ancient world.<sup>73</sup> Paul, for example, uses clothing metaphors in 2 Cor. 5:3–4 to speak of dying and transitioning to the state of the afterlife.<sup>74</sup> Clearly this language could be used as a metaphor for transitioning from the mortal body into some kind of heavenly existence.<sup>75</sup>

Second, as a result of Enoch's being anointed with the delightful oil that shines brighter than the greatest light (22:9) and being dressed in the garment of glory, he resembles the angels, apparently in every respect. In tradition [A] the point is particularly

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<sup>73</sup> See the evidence amassed by David Aune, "Anthropological Duality in the Eschatology of 2 Cor 4:16–5:10," in *Paul Beyond the Judaism and Hellenism Divide* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 215–39, here 314 n. 76.

<sup>74</sup> The nature of the afterlife Paul speaks about here is hotly disputed. For a succinct summary of the options see Aune, "Anthropological Duality," 219–20.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Apoc. Ab.* 13:13–14; *Ascen. Isa.* 7:22; 11:34–35.

clear. Enoch says, “I gazed at all of myself, and I had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference” (22:10 [A]).

Third, while Enoch still has a human body (see below), the properties of that body have been altered in important ways. Now he shines like the angels (22:10). Like the highest angels, he can stand in God’s glorious and fiery presence forever (22:5–8; 55:2; 67:2). Like the angels, he no longer needs or desires food (56:2). This evidence suggests that while Enoch still has a human body, his mode of corporeality is no longer subject to corruption and mortality. Importantly, too, as was the case in the Book of the Parables, he appears to represent a human being who has undergone the kind of transformation that the rest of the righteous will one day experience. Thus he later tells his children that at the end of the age the righteous “will have a great light for eternity, [and] an indestructible wall, and they will have a great paradise, and the shelter of an eternal residence. How happy are the righteous who will escape the LORD’s great judgment, for their faces will shine forth like the sun” (65:10–11 [A]; cf. the similar statement in 65:10–11 [J], where the corruptible things pass away and the righteous inherit incorruptibility).

Fourth, the imagery here reminds one of the transformation of Enoch at the end of the Book of the Parables. Here, as there, Enoch is in heaven with his human body. In the Parables Enoch’s human body undergoes a transformation when he draws near to God’s presence and his appearance becomes like that of the angels. The implication there, as seems likely here, is that Enoch must undergo this transformation in order to stand among the angels and be in the presence of God forever. He must be glorified/clothed with glory in order to be counted among those beings who stand closest to God and his throne.

All of this suggests that the language of Enoch being taken out of his earthly garment, anointed, and clothed in a glorious garment describes Enoch's bodily transformation. His earthly body has become a glorified body. Martha Himmelfarb asserts that "Enoch has become an angel."<sup>76</sup> Such a conclusion, however, oversimplifies the situation in *2 Enoch*. Other parts of the text go to great lengths to emphasize that Enoch has not stopped being human and become an angelic being.

To be sure, Enoch now shines with glory equal to that of the angels. Yet, whereas they are fiery spirits, his heavenly garment still has attributes that can be described as those of a human body. In 37:2, for example, before Enoch is permitted to descend back to the earth, one of the angels cools Enoch's face because he still cannot fully endure the terror of God's burning presence. In the [J] tradition the LORD further explains that if Enoch's face had not been cooled in heaven, "no human being would be able to look at your face" (37:2 [J]).<sup>77</sup>

What is more telling, however, is that once his glorified, heavenly face has been cooled, he descends to earth and interacts with his children. During this period he relates to them much of what he has learned about how they should live.<sup>78</sup> He begins by emphasizing that while he has seen the fiery lips, face, eyes, and right hand of the LORD, he nonetheless still has his own human lips, face, eyes, and right hand. In short, he claims to remain "a human being created equal to yourselves," "just like yourselves," and

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<sup>76</sup> Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 40.

<sup>77</sup> As with the emphasis on Enoch's face in the Book of Parables, this comment is also reminiscent of the way that Moses' face shone with God's glory and may itself be another indicator of a tradition concerning Moses' ascension into heaven at Sinai.

<sup>78</sup> The parallel with Moses coming down from Sinai with the Law is again apparent.

“identical to yourselves” (39:3–5 [A]; cf. 39:5 [J]). The shorter recension tradition even has Enoch state, “You, you see the extent of my body, the same as your own, but I have seen the extent of the LORD” (39:6 [A]).<sup>79</sup>

The comparison between God and human beings plays upon the notion of Adam being created in God’s image. The human being can therefore be described as having been created by God as “a facsimile” of the LORD’s own face (44:1). Thus, “Whoever insults a person’s face insults the face of the LORD; whoever treats a person’s face with repugnance treats the face of the LORD with repugnance” (44:2 [A]; cf. the similar statements in 44:2 [J]). Enoch continues teaching his family how to live rightly and promises them if they do so, they will inherit the endless “age that is coming” (50:2). He later declares that his eternal inheritance is to go back to the highest heaven (55:2 [A]; cf. 55:2 [J] which dubs this “the highest Jerusalem”).

Shortly before he returns to heaven, Enoch’s son Methuselah<sup>80</sup> asks him if he will eat with his family. His response clarifies that the body about which he spoke in chapter 39, that is, the body with which he came back to earth, *is* his transformed heavenly body. He says, “Listen, my child! Since the time when the LORD anointed me with the ointment of my glory, it has been horrible for me, and food is not agreeable to me, and I have no desire for earthly food” (56:2 [A]; cf. 56:2 [J]).

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<sup>79</sup> The [J] tradition reads, “But you see the scope of my activity, the same as your own; but I have seen the scope of the LORD.” Andersen plausibly argues that the [A] tradition maintains the original reading (i.e. body, not activity) here and that [J] reflects an attempt to clarify that Enoch’s comparison between human body parts should not be understood as implying that God also has a visible body. See Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” 1:163 n. g.

<sup>80</sup> The name is Methusalam in [J] and Mefusalom in [A].

Enoch remains *human*. Like his family on earth, he has a human body. He is the image of God. When, however, he was anointed with glory, his mortal body was transformed. Having been clothed with glory, he is now able to abide in heaven in the company of the highest angels, those who stand directly before God and his throne. His glorification has made his human body into something more at home in heaven and in God's presence than on earth.

### ***3.2.2.3 Conclusions: Bodily Ascension in 1 and 2 Enoch***

The foregoing survey allows the following conclusions. First, a consistent assumption of an ontological dualism between human beings and angels runs throughout this literature. Angels are fiery spirits while human beings are a particular kind of embodied entity. Heaven is a glorious realm full of bright light, fire, and life. Human bodies are impure and mortal. As beings subject to death and corruption, they are not able to dwell in the heavenly realms and are in danger of being destroyed by the divine glory of that place.

Second, while *1* and *2 Enoch* contain accounts of Enoch ascending into heaven by way of dreams and visions, these stories do not contain depictions of Enoch being transformed when he ascends. Only when he is clearly depicted as ascending with his human body does some kind of transformation of his kind of physicality occur. This is particularly linked with his appearance before God and his throne. Notably, Enoch's transformation also correlates with his ability to remain in heaven and dwell amongst the angels. Such a pattern is indicative of the underlying dualism just noted. Mortal human

bodies do not belong in heaven. Thus when Enoch's body does go up to heaven, something has to happen to it for him to be fit to remain in those realms.

Third, and closely linked with the last point, the language of "glory" is employed to describe the transformation that Enoch's body undergoes. For the human body to be comfortable in the presence of God and the angels, it must be imbued with the glory of God. Thus, after putting on his garment of glory, Enoch becomes like the angels. He shines, has enduring life, no longer needs food, and can directly approach God and his throne (*2 Enoch*). In both *1* and *2 Enoch*, Enoch's glorification is presented as the telic pattern for all the righteous. In *1 Enoch* his transformation is a proleptic depiction of what the righteous will receive at the resurrection. Enoch is not resurrected (he never dies), but when his flesh melts away and his spirit is transformed, he is likely being portrayed as putting on his garment of glory, a garment of enduring life that never wears out or fades (cf. *1 En.* 62:15; 71:11).

Fourth, while some have argued that Enoch becomes an angel in these accounts, a closer examination of the texts suggests that this is not actually the case. While the exact nature of the glorified Enoch is less than clear, the echoes of Adam's restoration, and, in *2 Enoch* in particular, the plain affirmation that Enoch still has a human body, suggest that while he is no longer mortal, he remains a human being. Enoch becomes *like* the angels in some ways, but this likeness has to do primarily with the glory and enduring life that Enoch has once his mortal body has been transformed. Importantly, however, this glorification does not erase his humanity. Like Adam, he becomes the son of man in *1 Enoch* when he is glorified. As the son of man, he is worshiped by the angels. In *2 Enoch*

he is, like Adam, the kind of body that is the image of God. He does *not* become an angel. Rather, he becomes a glorified human being who is fit to approach the divine throne and who becomes equal to or greater than the highest angels.<sup>81</sup>

Fifth, Enoch's bodily glorification appears to be a strategy for addressing the ontological dualism between humanity and the angels that both maintains that dualism, and resolves the tension that presently correlates with that dualism. The glorification of Enoch, and so also all the righteous at the end of the age, does *not* make him (or the righteous) into angels. Angelic beings and human beings remain ontologically distinct. The former continue to be shining, ever-living, fiery spirits. The latter become shining, ever-living, beings whose bodies manifest the image of God. It seems more accurate to conclude that, by way of human glorification, the exclusive force that presently results in tension between humans and angels is removed. The glorification of the human body, that is, makes humans *qua* humans fit to dwell in the presence of God and all the angels.

### ***3.2.3 Summary: The Plausibility of Jesus' Bodily Ascension in Hebrews***

Within the genre of Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic (though also outside of it) an ontological dualism between angels and humans and a correlated dualism between heaven and earth are evident. Humans, with their mortal bodies, are not fit for the heavenly realms where the fiery, angelic spirits and the presence of God reside. Different

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<sup>81</sup> The language of the righteous receiving garments of glory—that is, garments of *life* that never wear out—may be especially instructive here. The text implies the need for the righteous to receive a garment. Resurrected humans exchange mortal flesh for garments of glory/life. The point seems to be that humans do not go naked, but get glorious bodies in place of their corruptible, mortal bodies (cf. 2 Cor 5:1–10). Other apocalyptic texts contain similar ideas (e.g., *Ascen. Isa.* 7:22 where a heavenly garment and throne, which is located above the angels, awaits Isaiah after he dies), though some appear to equate the glorious garment of the righteous with angelic existence (e.g., *Apoc. Zeph.* 8:3; cf. 6:11–12; 9:3).

strategies were evident in this literature for addressing the problem of how corruptible humanity can ascend into heaven. Of particular note, though, were the accounts of Enoch ascending into heaven with his human body.

In these latter accounts, as similarly in the Talmudic story of Moses' ascent, the ascending human was clothed in a garment of glory, brought into close proximity to God and his throne, and experienced a change in status vis-à-vis the angels. Notably, this set of motifs (approaching God, being clothed in glory, becoming a companion of the angels) is mostly found in accounts of bodily ascension. Even in *I Enoch*, as also in other Second Temple and early Common Era texts, this set of motifs is generally not found when the ascension is of a spiritual or visionary nature. This likely follows from the fact that spiritual and visionary ascensions address the issue of the dualism between heaven and earth by avoiding having to pose it in its sharpest form. Spirits, that is, are more easily made fit for the realm of spirits than are bodies of flesh and blood. The issue comes to the fore when the account depicts a bodily ascension and addresses the question of a human dwelling in God's presence.

In accounts that have affinities with or are oriented toward Greco-Roman philosophical discussions, the dualisms between heaven and earth and between the residents of those two spheres are dealt with by erasing them. The human spirit is already a spark of heavenly light or divine nous. As such, the spirit ascends by escaping the earthly body, i.e., being permanently freed from flesh and blood. Only as a spirit, which actually belongs in heaven, can the person enter the realm of the spirits/gods. In some Jewish apocalyptic ascension accounts apparently analogous solutions are evident. But, in



others, like those of Enoch in the Book of the Parables and *2 Enoch*, the ontological distinctions between humans and heavenly spirits appear to be maintained. In these cases the dualism between heaven and earth is not resolved by erasing the ontological distinctions between humans and angels. Rather, it is resolved by the extension of God's glory to the human body. Human ontology is transformed/glorified, not destroyed.

It should be noted that this latter solution to the dualisms just mentioned corresponds well with the visions of the glorious transformation of the world so that it can be an eternal inheritance discussed in chapter two of this study. In some apocalyptic texts, the extension of God's glory to the earth resolves the tension inherent in the cosmological dualism between heaven and earth along lines that closely parallel the extension of God's glory to the human bodies of the righteous. The earth is transformed into a dwelling place fit for God, just as the mortal body is transformed into something fit to enter heaven. The endowment of divine glory is central in both cases. In all likelihood the eschatological resurrection of the dead, and the righteous in particular, expresses the link between this kind of eschatological cosmology and the vision of glorified humans like Enoch entering and remaining in heaven.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, it is not hard to imagine someone who thought in terms of God's glory filling the earth also thinking in terms of the possibility of human bodies being glorified.

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<sup>82</sup> At the conclusion of her study on ascension accounts Dean-Otting similarly speculates on the link between the transfer of God's glory with an ascending human and the eschatological resurrection of the righteous (*Heavenly Journeys*, 282–83). She rightly concludes that the purpose of this sharing of God's glory with humanity is to bring God and humanity into close proximity with each other (283).

In any case, the pattern of bodily ascension correlating with glorification, proximity to God's throne, and a change in relationship with the angels provides a significant historical parallel against which to assess the argument of Heb 1–2. That the author maintains an ontological distinction between the Son and the angels in Heb 1–2 is clear. Moreover, that this distinction is based on the ontological differences between angels and humans is also clear. Angels are fiery, ministering spirits. Humans are blood and flesh. Humans, though, have been promised dominion over the οἰκουμένη to come, not angels. Thus, the exaltation of the Son to the throne above the angels is predicated in Hebrews on his being human, as opposed to an angelic spirit. Is it then plausible to imagine the author of Hebrews positing that Jesus has a human body in heaven?

In light of the pattern just discussed, the author's clear affirmation of Jesus' ascension (4:14; cf. 1:6) together with his emphases on the Son's glory (1:3; 2:9) and elevation to the throne above the angels make this conclusion highly plausible. I have already argued that the account of Moses' ascension into heaven may underlie the writer's argument. In addition to the plain affirmation of Heb 4:14, it is virtually certain that the author is thinking in terms of *human* ascension into heaven in Heb 1–2. His emphasis on the Son's glory and the angels' subjection further suggests that he applies to Jesus the kind of pattern attested in apocalyptic literature (though also in *Talmud Babli*) to depict *bodily* ascension into heaven. Not only does the conclusion that Jesus has a human body in heaven cohere with the findings of chapter two of this study, it coheres with other, roughly contemporary, accounts of bodily ascents.

The primary difference between Jesus' ascension and the ascensions of Moses and Enoch is that Jesus' ascension occurred after his death. The Enochic accounts already indicate a close link between glorification and the eschatological resurrection. If Jesus is conceived by the author as having ascended into heaven with his human body, something like that link must be presupposed by him. That Jesus suffered and then was crowned with glory (2:9), and that he now leads others into glory (2:10), could certainly be read as assuming a death followed by glorification/resurrection pattern of which, like Enoch, Jesus is the first example. In that case Jesus' resurrection would be the implicit answer to the question one could legitimately wonder about when reflecting on Jesus' bodily ascension. How could Jesus take a human body into heaven? After his suffering unto death, he was resurrected. Thus he now has a glorified body (similar to the Enoch pattern).

Yet, if this hypothesis is anywhere near the mark, one can justifiably ask why Jesus' resurrection is hardly mentioned (if at all), and further, why it seems to play little or no role in the homily's high-priestly Christology. In the remainder of this chapter I argue that reference to Jesus' resurrection is not only more prevalent than is often thought, but that this belief plays a central role in the high-priestly Christology for which the author argues.

To demonstrate these points I first study the concepts of resurrection that *are* present in Hebrews. I then consider the possibility that the author makes reference to Jesus' resurrection in the sermon. Finally, I show how the hypothesis that the author's perfection language (as it applies to Jesus) is inclusive of Jesus' resurrection/glorification.

Thus, the presumption of Jesus' resurrection is shown to underpin the author's argument that Jesus can serve as the great high priest the author confesses him to be.

### **3.3 Concepts of Resurrection in Hebrews**

As noted in chapter one of this study, the author makes little (a few would even say no)<sup>83</sup> explicit reference to Jesus' resurrection. Nevertheless, some affirmation of a notion of resurrection is plainly present in this document. Four times the author refers to some kind of resurrection (cf. 6:2; 11:19, 35a, 35c). In order to get a sense of what he likely meant when he spoke of resurrection, it will be necessary to examine these references in detail.

#### **3.3.1 Hebrews 6:1–2**

In Heb 6:1–2 the writer urges his audience to “move beyond” (ἀφίημι)<sup>84</sup> the rudiments of their faith in Christ. His exhortation here forms one element of a larger parenetic discourse begun in 5:11 and extending to 6:20.<sup>85</sup> As part of his rhetorical strategy he sets up a distinction between milk/infants and solid food/adults in 5:12–14. In

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<sup>83</sup> See section 1.2.3 of this study.

<sup>84</sup> Attridge rightly notes, “The author urges his addressees to ‘leave behind’ ... the basics, not in the sense that they are to neglect or forsake them” (Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 162). That the author's point has to do with growing or developing from a basic foundation to a more advanced understanding is suggested by the metaphor of a child drinking milk and growing into an adult who eats solid food (5:11–14) and by the further comment in 6:1 to move on to maturity (cf. Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 311).

<sup>85</sup> This is widely recognized (e.g., Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001], 84; see also the overview of different approaches to the letter's structure in William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* [WBC 47A; Dallas: Word Books, 1991], .xxxiv–xcviii).

his opinion, the members of his audience should be teachers by now. Instead, they still need milk—the basic teachings about God.

The comparisons to a young child who can only digest milk with a beginning student who is attempting to master certain basic principles, and to a more mature individual who can digest solid food with an advanced student who has progressed in understanding and is able to comprehend more advanced teaching, were common metaphors in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>86</sup> At the heart of these similes lies the notion of progression from a grasp of fundamental teachings to the ability to handle more advanced concepts. The rudiments form the foundation upon which more advanced levels of understanding rest.<sup>87</sup>

Given this larger cultural context, the litany of elements provided in 6:1–2 should probably be identified as the basic teachings the author compares with milk.<sup>88</sup> The conceptual content of the solid food is more difficult to ascertain. Yet, two factors suggest that it should be understood as the assertion the author just sketched in 5:5–10—specifically, that in addition to being the exalted Son, Jesus is the high priest in Melchizedek’s order.

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<sup>86</sup> Many scholars note this. See e.g., James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (CBQMS 13; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982), 17–40.

<sup>87</sup> The author clearly identifies these elements as a “foundation” (θεμέλιος) in 6:1 that he should not have to lay again for his audience.

<sup>88</sup> The rudimentary teachings about God and the rudimentary word about Christ appear to be parallel statements. Both are probably to be equated with the milk of 5:12b (cf., e.g., Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 303).

First, the author makes clear in 6:1–2 that he intends to move into more advanced matters.<sup>89</sup> It is likely that the discussion following his exhortation is the more advanced teaching or solid food he had in mind in 5:12–14. Second, in 6:20 he returns to the very point he was discussing in 5:10, before he began the excursus of 5:11–6:20. This strongly suggests that the discussion of 7:1–28 is the “word that is hard to explain” (ὁ λόγος καὶ δυσερμηνευτος λέγειν) that he mentioned in 5:11.<sup>90</sup> That is, just as 6:1–2 indicate, he presses on to present them with the solid food, rather than enumerating a detailed review of the rudiments. All of this implies that the writer employs that metaphor of milk/solid food as a means of making his audience more amenable to what he wants to say about Jesus’ high priesthood. This is an advanced teaching, something founded upon the rudiments, not something that stands against or calls into question those more fundamental elements of their confession.

With this in mind, it is interesting to note that one of the rudimentary teachings the writer highlights here in 6:2 is “the resurrection of the dead.” As many commentators point out, all the elements listed by the author fit well within a Jewish context.<sup>91</sup> Several also argue convincingly that the six items listed break down into three pairs of two with

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<sup>89</sup> This seems to be the import of the author’s comment in 6:1: διὸ ... ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φερώμεθα, μὴ πάλιν θεμέλιον καταβαλλόμενοι.

<sup>90</sup> The οὗ of περὶ οὗ in 5:11 is probably neuter and indicates the broader topic of Jesus’ high priesthood (so, e.g., Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 136, who translates it “about this subject”). This is further suggested by the bracket of 4:14–16 and 8:1–2. The larger point at issue is likely to be the author’s justification for Jesus’ high-priestly qualifications *in spite of* his tribal lineage (see discussion below).

<sup>91</sup> This is widely recognized (e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 163–64; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 139).

the last two pairs standing in apposition to the first one.<sup>92</sup> Thus “repentance from dead works” and “faith in God” belong together as a pair of general categories. The various items that follow represent more specific teachings that spell out what repentance and faith involve. Initiation rites (i.e., baptism and laying on of hands) are the correlate of repentance, while beliefs about last things (i.e., resurrection and final judgment) are conjoined with faith in God.

In light of the eschatology discussed in chapter two of this study and the parallels with some apocalyptic ascension texts, the last set of paired terms—resurrection and eternal judgment—further indicates the fundamental importance of an apocalyptic eschatological cosmology for the author of Hebrews. Some argue that recognizing the eschatological outlook implicit here does not allow one to draw a firm conclusion as to how the writer conceived of the future events he confessed.<sup>93</sup> Yet, the larger pattern of a hope for a renewal of the world identified in chapter two of this study, coupled with the implicit importance of Jesus’ glorified humanity in the heavenly οἰκουμένη in Heb 1–2, allow the supposition that this eschatological resurrection of the dead involves the

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<sup>92</sup> See esp. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 137 n. 3, 139. Attridge (*Hebrews*, 155 n. 10), and Lane (*Hebrews 1–8*, 132 n. n.), among others, follow G. Zuntz’s argument (*The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* [London: Oxford University Press, 1953], 93–94) for the variant διδαχῆν (P<sup>46</sup> B 0151 d) as more likely to be original (not διδαχῆς, which is printed in NA<sup>27</sup>). Zuntz argues that the genitive is “inadmissible” for reasons of style and sense (the other genitives are logically and syntactically dependent on the terms *foundation* and *teaching*). Thus, “The notion of ‘teaching’ is on a level with that of ‘foundation’, and not with that of ‘repentance’ and ‘faith’” (93). The genitives βαπτισμῶν and ἐπιθέσεως can then be seen to define the teaching, just as μετανοίας and πίστεως define the foundation.

<sup>93</sup> Koester, for instance, argues that, “Hebrews’ views concerning the mode of resurrection exhibit some of the tensions apparent in other sources” (*Hebrews*, 305). He means here that in his judgment it is unclear whether the text envisions a bodily resurrection in the judgment or if it has spiritual existence/life after death in view.

glorification of corruptible bodies. Regardless, two points matter for the larger argument of this chapter.

First, whatever the author actually thought about the nature of the resurrection mentioned here, it appears to be of an enduring or “eternal” kind. Given that the judgment coupled with this resurrection is described with the adjective “eternal” (αἰώνιος), it follows that the eschatological life into which the dead arise will have an eternal quality (i.e., one capable of receiving eternal judgment). This may seem self-evident, but in light of the distinction the writer makes in 11:35 between resurrection and the “better” resurrection, it is worth noting.<sup>94</sup> Second, the belief in this future, eternal resurrection of the dead forms an essential element of faith in God for this writer. That is, the eschatological resurrection of the dead is one of the rudiments that further defines what “faith in God” means. Faith for this author must partially consist in the belief in God’s power to raise the dead.

### **3.3.2 Hebrews 11:17–19**

Another passage in Hebrews that unequivocally refers to a resurrection is 11:17–19. Here Abraham stands as a shining example of faith receiving its promised reward from God. In these verses the author depicts Abraham acting faithfully in the midst of being tested (πειραζόμενος). Abraham’s offering of Isaac is said to be grounded in his reckoning (λογισάμενος) that if he slew Isaac, God was “able to raise [him] out of the dead ones” (ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγείρειν δυνατὸς ὁ θεός). Because God had promised Abraham

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<sup>94</sup> I discuss Heb 11:35 in section 3.3.3.



heirs through Isaac, he reckoned that God would bring Isaac out of the dead so that even if he killed him, Isaac would be the source of his progeny, just as God promised.<sup>95</sup>

This point coheres well with the twin themes that stand at the heart of the exposition on faith in Heb 11—life being brought out of death, and corruptibility inheriting incorruptibility. The visible creation comes about by way of the creative power of God’s word bringing life and form out of things unseen (11:3). Though dead, Abel still speaks (11:4). Enoch did not experience death but was “transformed” (μετατίθημι, 11:5). Noah, too, escaped death and became an heir (11:7). Abraham and Sarah were as good as dead, yet brought forth life (11:12). Moses held the unseen eternal (and so imperishable) rewards as of greater value than the corruptible treasures of Pharaoh (11:25–26).

All the individuals mentioned are portrayed as people who acted in accord with their faith that God would give them both life beyond death and an incorruptible inheritance—a heavenly city and land (11:10, 16). The point of the chapter, in other words, is that one of the central aspects of faith is its ability to comprehend that, in spite of the experiences of death, corruption, and loss, God will make good on his promises. The limited attainment of God’s promises (e.g., dwelling in the land of Canaan, birthing Isaac) pales in comparison to the fullness of the eternal inheritance.

For the author of Hebrews, the account of Abraham’s willingness to obey God and offer his son serves as yet another example of God’s fulfilling his promises *in spite of* death. As noted, Abraham believed God’s promise that he would have progeny through

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<sup>95</sup> See especially the discussion in Bruce, *Hebrews*, 303–4.

Isaac. He therefore reasoned that God would raise Isaac from the dead so that Isaac would be able to beget the progeny God promised to him. Abraham, in other words, expected God to take Isaac's dead body and give it life again so that Isaac would still be the son through whom God would fulfill his promise to give Abraham countless heirs. Notably, nothing in these few verses suggests the kind of eternal, eschatological resurrection envisioned in 6:2. Rather, Abraham appears to be presented as believing that, if he did kill Isaac, his corpse<sup>96</sup> would be revived.

### 3.3.3 *Hebrews 11:35*

In 11:35a the writer comments, “women received their dead by means of resurrection” (ἔλαβον γυναῖκες ἐξ ἀναστάσεως τοὺς νεκροὺς αὐτῶν). Given the lack of more specific details, it is difficult to know from the context what definite examples Hebrews alludes to here.<sup>97</sup> The main thrust, however, seems clear enough. The author and presumably the readers know accounts of loved ones who had died being restored to life and being reunited with their relations.<sup>98</sup>

That Hebrews affirms an eschatological resurrection, one which has a different quality relative to those mentioned in 11:35a, is clearly implied in 11:35c where the

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<sup>96</sup> The use of νεκρός here (cf. 13:20) is telling insofar as the word denotes the concrete notion of a dead body, not the more abstract notion of death.

<sup>97</sup> The mention of women in particular suggests Elijah and Elisha, though the comment could equally apply to Mary and Martha. Given the context of those, especially from Hebrew scripture, who had faith prior to the chief example of Jesus himself (12:2), the stories connected with Elijah and Elisha seem most likely (so, e.g., Bruce, *Hebrews*, 325).

<sup>98</sup> That this refers to a temporary restoration of life or resuscitation is widely recognized. For only a few examples see, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 350; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 627–29; Koester, *Hebrews*, 514, 19; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Hebrews*, (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 186.

writer speaks of those who endured torture that they might obtain a κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως. The presence of the adjective κρείττων suggests that the writer knows of a resurrection that is in some way different than the one just mentioned in 11:35a. Three factors support the conclusion that the “betterness” of this resurrection has to do with its eschatological and enduring quality.

First, the other resurrections mentioned in this chapter (i.e., the resurrections to which this latter one is being compared and being judged as “better”) involve the resuscitation of corpses (cf. 11:19, 35a); that is, a return to mortal life. As such, those who were resurrected remained subject to death. Given the direct contrast between 11:35a and the κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως in 11:35c, it follows that that this latter resurrection must be in some way superior to the resuscitations noted in 11:35a—a resurrection to a life no longer subject to death.<sup>99</sup>

Second, this better resurrection is one of several eschatological promises listed in this chapter (cf. vv. 9–10 and 13–16 where the promises are for a city and a homeland). Yet, the other promises are closely linked with the heavenly realm (the city is built by God, v. 10, and the homeland is heavenly, v. 16). Because these eschatological possessions are heavenly, they are unshakable and enduring (cf. 12:25–29). These data imply that the *better* resurrection, like the enduring eschatological city and homeland, must be a resurrection to a life that endures. This conclusion also makes good sense in

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<sup>99</sup> This is widely accepted (for example, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 350, who finds it likely; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 325; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* [WBC 47B; Dallas: Word Books, 1991], 389).

light of the contrast discussed above—the resuscitations do not result in eternally enduring life, while the better resurrection is *better* at just this point.

Third, the author’s use of the adverb κρείττον/κρείσσον and the adjective κρείττων/κρείσσων throughout this letter often connotes the heavenly nature of the modified term. At 11:16 he explicitly employs the adjective as a means of identifying an implied homeland as “heavenly” (see also 11:40). In 9:23 the “better sacrifices” are those that pertain to the heavenly tabernacle, while in 7:19 and 22, 8:6, and 12:24 the better hope, covenant, promises, and mediation all relate to the fact that Jesus’ ministry occurs in heaven (cf. 8:4) and can therefore bring people into God’s presence. The use of the adjective in 10:34 plainly connotes the enduring quality of the possessions that believers have. Moreover, the contrast here with earthly possessions that can be plundered implicitly suggests that the “better possessions” are heavenly ones. In fact, only two instances of this language in the letter appear not to bear an immediately clear sense that the “betterness” of the modified term has to do with its heavenly or enduring qualities (see 1:4 and 7:7).

There are, then, good grounds for concluding that the promised better resurrection entails a resurrection to a life that endures. Such a resurrection is much more than the mere resuscitation of a corpse to mortal life. In all likelihood, the language of a “better resurrection” is simply another way of referring to the eschatological resurrection the author mentioned in 6:2. This resurrection brings with it a life no longer subject to corruptibility and destruction. Death no longer has any claim or power over this better resurrection life. The better resurrection, in other words, produces the kind of life fit to

inherit the fullness of the other eschatological promises—an enduring city and a heavenly homeland.

### ***3.3.4 Summary: Temporary Resurrections and the Better Resurrection***

The evidence in Hebrews shows that the author thought in terms of two different kinds of resurrection. On the one hand, the writer knows of people who died and yet were brought back to life again. This kind of resurrection involves corpses being resuscitated. Those who experienced this blessing rose up, but were not ultimately placed beyond the power of death. Rather, their corruptible bodies were granted a temporary return to life. On the other hand, he also confesses a resurrection that is of a different, better order. The latter resurrection entails the attainment of eternal life and makes one fit for eternal judgment. Those who endured their suffering looked forward to one day obtaining this better life, presumably along with the better city and homeland promised to them by God.

While this brief survey exhausts the obvious references to some kind of resurrection in Hebrews, it is important, especially in view of the fact that some think the author intentionally denies Jesus' resurrection, to highlight these passages. The author plainly believed in resurrection, both as a temporary return to life and as an eschatological event conferring eternal life. If he knows and affirms these concepts of resurrection generally, it is hard to see why he would suppress or deny them for Jesus specifically. It is now necessary, however, to consider whether or not the homily provides evidence that he conceived of Jesus' victory over death in terms of either of these notions of resurrection.

### 3.4 Jesus' Resurrection in Hebrews

The only relatively clear reference to Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews occurs in 13:20 where God is identified as having “brought out of the dead ones (ἐκ νεκρῶν) the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus.”<sup>100</sup> A more subtle allusion to Jesus' resurrection, though, is likely present in Heb 5:7. Here the writer declares that Jesus, “in the days of his flesh, was offering up prayers and requests with a great cry and tears to the one who was able (τὸν δυνάμενον) to save him out of the realm of death (ἐκ θανάτου), and he was heard because of his reverence.”<sup>101</sup>

Joachim Jeremias rightly characterizes this text as “eine alte crux interpretum.”<sup>102</sup> In keeping with this judgment, one is hardly surprised to find that scholars suggest a number of different solutions to the obvious problem of what the text means by saying that God *heard* Jesus' prayer since Jesus clearly was *not* rescued from his impending death on the cross. Among the views proposed, one finds the suggestions that God's “hearing” or answer of Jesus' prayer refers to 1) Jesus' exaltation to the heavenly realms,<sup>103</sup> 2) God's acceptance of the efficacious nature of Jesus' sacrificial death,<sup>104</sup> 3)

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<sup>100</sup> As noted in section 1.2.3, not everyone considers 13:20 a reference to Jesus' resurrection. See, in particular, my discussion of Harold Attridge's position for arguments against interpreting 13:20 in terms of Jesus' resurrection.

<sup>101</sup> The use of ἐκ seems not to imply salvation “from” death, but rather salvation “out of” death since, as 13:20 shows, the author clearly knows that Jesus died and was brought out of that state by God. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 150; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 288–91.

<sup>102</sup> Joachim Jeremias, “Hbr 5:7-10,” *ZNW* 44 (1952): 107–11.

<sup>103</sup> For example, Jeremias comments that “*Gegenstand der Bitte Jesu ist ... seine Erhöhung*” (Ibid., 109, emphasis original). See also Koester, *Hebrews*, 285; and, Attridge who writes, “Jesus was heard, but his prayer for deliverance was answered only in his exaltation” (*Hebrews*, 150).

<sup>104</sup> E.g., Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 119; see also Lane, “Living a Life of Faith in the Face of Death: The Witness of Hebrews,” in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 247–69.

the efficacious nature of Jesus' priestly prayer on behalf of his people,<sup>105</sup> 4) Jesus' desire to be freed *not* from death per se, but rather from the *fear* of death,<sup>106</sup> or 5) Jesus' resurrection from the dead.<sup>107</sup> A sixth option involving an emendation of the text was proposed by Adolf von Harnack. He argued that since Jesus did die, it is more likely that the original text read "and he was *not* heard." Later Christian scribes, offended by the thought that God would not have listened to Jesus' cries for help, dropped out the original οὐκ.<sup>108</sup>

In order to assess these positions and better grasp the implications of Heb 5:7, the verse needs to be read in light of the recognition that Jesus stands as the chief example of a larger pattern that runs right through the letter—namely, that God rewards those who faithfully persevere in times of testing. In view of this pattern, I argue that the mention of Jesus' being "heard" should be recognized as a reference to Jesus' resurrection. I begin with a brief explication of the place of Jesus within the larger pattern of suffering and reward in Hebrews.

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<sup>105</sup> E.g., DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 190–1.

<sup>106</sup> Montefiore argues that the meaning cannot be that God saved Jesus from death since Jesus obviously died. Thus Jesus must have been saved not from death, but from his fear (εὐλαβεία) of death. Hugh Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 98–99.

<sup>107</sup> E.g., Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 288.

<sup>108</sup> Harnack states, "Man muß sich dabei erinnern, daß die alte Exegese häufig genug beim einzelnen Ausdruck hängen blieb und ihn nicht im Zusammenhang des Ganzen würdigte. Der runde Ausdruck, Gott hat Jesum nicht erhört, konnte frommem Sinn unerträglich erscheinen, und so begreift man es leicht, daß die Negation gestrichen wurde. Man darf sagen: die Tilgung ist ebenso verständlich, wie ihr Unrecht offenbar" (Adolf von Harnack, "Zwei alte dogmatische Korrekturen im Hebräerbrief," in *Studien zur Geschichte des Neuen Testaments und der Alten Kirche* [vol. 1; *Zur Neutestamentlichen Textkritik*; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1931], 235–52, here 250).

### ***3.4.1 Jesus as the Paradigmatic Example of Faith in the Midst of Testing: Part 1***

Already in 4:15 the writer has presented Jesus as an example of someone who, although tested (πειρασμένον) in every respect, was without sin. While the notion of “sin” in this letter entails a great deal more than a mere lack of faith in the face of testing, such faithlessness is closely associated with sin in the near context of 4:15 (see 3:12, 19, and 4:2 where ἀπιστία in the midst of testing is correlated with the sin that prevents one from obtaining God’s promises).<sup>109</sup> The comment that Jesus was without sin when tested therefore implies that his own behavior during his time of testing was characterized by faith. In contrast to Israel’s faithless response in the wilderness (cf. 3:7–4:2), Jesus acted in faith during his time of testing.<sup>110</sup>

Hebrews 5:7 clarifies at least one of the ways in which Jesus’ faith expressed itself. In the midst of his ordeal, he cried out to the one who was able to save him out of the realm of death. By highlighting the fact that Jesus cried out to God, the author implicitly presents Jesus as an illustration of the very kind of bold reliance upon God in times of need that he has just urged upon his audience in their own times of testing (cf. 4:14–16).<sup>111</sup> Additionally, the identification of God as having the “power to save out of the realm of death” suggests that a key element of Jesus’ faith was the belief that God was able to resurrect him out of the realm of death. Two factors further substantiate this interpretation.

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<sup>109</sup> According to LXX Ps. 94:8 (cf. Heb 3:8), Israel’s failure in the wilderness occurred in “the day of testing” (τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ).

<sup>110</sup> See, e.g., Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 292.

<sup>111</sup> See DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 191.



First, such an understanding of faith accords well with some of the most rudimentary Christian teachings the writer goes on to outline. As discussed above, 6:1–2 indicate that faith in God along with belief in the resurrection belong to the most elementary principles of “the initial teaching” (see also 11:6 and 11:35 where these same elements are also presented as constitutive of faith). Second, as will be argued in more detail below, in the only other passage in the letter where God is described as having the power to save out of death, the reference is explicitly collocated with belief in resurrection (see 11:17–19). All of this suggests the conclusion that the portrayal of Jesus’ own response in the midst of testing in 5:7 illustrates the kind of faith that the author impresses upon his readers.<sup>112</sup> Of particular note, however, is the comment that as a result of Jesus’ reverence,<sup>113</sup> he was *heard*.

Hebrews’ reference to Jesus’ “prayers” (δεήσεις) and “cry” (κραυγῆς) being “heard” (εἰσακουσθείς) echoes the rich biblical tradition of God’s people and/or the afflicted righteous one crying out to God in times of dire need and being heard.<sup>114</sup> In such contexts God’s “hearing” typically connotes the salvation of those crying out.<sup>115</sup> In view of this background, the author’s comment that Jesus’ cry “was heard” should be understood as an indication that God did in fact save him. Yet, in contrast to much of the

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<sup>112</sup> Jesus’ role as the paradigm of faith is spelled out more clearly in 12:1–4 (for a more detailed discussion of this point see below). See *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>113</sup> Given that Jesus’ crying out to God is portrayed as an act of faithful obedience, it follows that Jesus’ faithful endurance even unto death appears most naturally to be at the heart of what the writer has in view when he speaks in v. 7 of Jesus’ εὐλάβεια.

<sup>114</sup> For a few examples see Exod 2:23–24; LXX Pss 4:2–4; 6:9–10; 17; 21:23–25; 30:20–25; 90:14–16; Jon 2:3–10; Mic 7:7–8.

<sup>115</sup> See the references in the note above. Within the biblical narrative this pattern of God’s hearing resulting in salvation is also linked with Israel’s inheritance of the land (cf. Exod 3:7–8; 6:4–8; Deut 26:5–9; Neh 9:7–15).

tradition just mentioned, Jesus' suffering ultimately ended in his death (2:9). Since he was not saved from dying, the author's claim that Jesus "was heard" most likely points to God's salvific action on his behalf as something that occurred *after* his death—i.e., as salvation out of the realm of death (not salvation from having to endure the suffering or fear of death).<sup>116</sup>

Jesus' own faith when tested was rewarded in that God heard him and, by implication, saved him out of the realm of death. If this is correct, then the mention in 5:7 of Jesus crying out and being heard is consistent with the author's emphasis throughout the letter on faithful endurance and the reception of God's promises (see, for example, 6:12–15 which anticipates 11:1–12:2). That Jesus' salvation out of death is indeed a reference to his resurrection becomes clearer when one considers other passages in the letter where this pattern of faith and reward is explicitly linked with resurrection.<sup>117</sup>

### ***3.4.2 Resurrection and Abraham's Faith in the Midst of Testing***

The similarities between Heb 11:17–19 and 5:7 are striking. First, it is notable that in this homily both Jesus and Abraham are explicitly described as having been

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<sup>116</sup> See especially the discussion in William R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* (WMANT 53; Neukirchner-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1991), 99–104. It should be pointed out that this conclusion shows significant development relative to the majority of the psalm texts in which the righteous are heard and saved *before* they die. There are, however, clues that this tradition is developing toward the notion of resurrection (cf., for instance, Bernd Janowski, *Konfliktgespräche mit Gott: Eine Anthropologie der Psalmen* [Neukirchner-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 2003], 336–38).

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 288, who also thinks Jesus' resurrection is implicit here (in spite of his agreement with the consensus that "elsewhere in Hebrews the resurrection of Jesus is not prominent"). Various other interpretations have been offered, but many understand Jesus' being "heard" as implying his exaltation (e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 150; Jeremias, 'Hbr 5.7–10,' 107–11; Loader, *Sohn*, 101; H. –F. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer: Übersetzt und Erklärt* [15th ed.; KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991], 314–16).

“tested” (2:18, 4:15, and 11:19).<sup>118</sup> Second, in both 5:7 and 11:19 the writer speaks of God as having the “ability” or “power” (cf. the participle *δυνάμενον* in 5:7, the adjective *δυνατός* in 11:19) to deliver someone “out of” (ἐκ) death. Third, this particular belief about God—that God is able to save people out of death—appears to be the primary element of faith being emphasized in both passages. In other words, faith in God’s power to save someone out of death motivated the exemplary faithful behavior both these individuals demonstrated when tested. Fourth, in both cases the faithful endurance is rewarded. Jesus was heard. Abraham received Isaac back again.

In both passages, then, faithful perseverance leads to some form of salvation in relation to death. In the case of Abraham that salvation is said to be a resurrection ἐν παραβολῇ (v. 19)—only a hint or type of the good things to come.<sup>119</sup> In the case of Jesus, the situation is obviously different because, unlike Isaac, he actually did die. Nevertheless, the same basic pattern underlies these texts: 1) faith in God as the one who can raise the dead is an essential component of endurance in times of testing, and 2) God is shown to reward such faith with salvation. In 11:17–19 one sees, even if only in a parable, that this reward or salvation is ultimately the resurrection.

The linguistic and conceptual parallels between 5:7 and 11:17–19 provide good grounds for concluding that when the author states in 5:7 that Jesus’ prayer to the one who could save him out of death was *heard*, he is alluding to Jesus’ resurrection. In the

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<sup>118</sup> The people of God in the past (3:8) and, implicitly, in the present (4:15–16) are said to experience testing, but apart from the mention of God being tested (3:9), Jesus and Abraham are the only individuals in the letter overtly identified as having been tested.

<sup>119</sup> E.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 335; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 304; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 604.

midst of Jesus' faithful suffering, God heard his cry and did exactly what 13:20 claims—brought him out of the dead.<sup>120</sup> There is, however, yet another important piece of evidence for the presence of Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews. In keeping with the pattern of faith receiving God's commendation, Jesus stands in 12:2 at the very climax of the list of those whose faithful lives exemplify this pattern.

### ***3.4.3 Jesus as the Paradigmatic Example of Faith in the Midst of Testing: Part 2***

Heb 11 consists of a litany of individuals who, because of their faith, are presented by the author as examples of those who will ultimately inherit God's promises. While the list provides instances of promises fulfilled (i.e., faith already rewarded—e.g., Enoch was taken, Abraham received Isaac back, the walls of Jericho fell, Rahab was spared), there are a few key eschatological promises still unfulfilled and toward which those on the list are explicitly said to still look forward in faith. These promises are the objects of the eschatological hope discussed above—a city built by God (v. 10), a heavenly homeland (vv. 14–16), and a better resurrection (v. 35).

Of crucial significance here is the fact that Jesus stands at the pinnacle of the list of the faithful presented in Heb 11. He is the *Paradebeispiel* of someone who faithfully suffered in order to obtain the greater joy promised to him. By placing Jesus at the list's apex, the author holds him up as the main example to be emulated. Jesus, as the ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής of the faith (12:2), is thus presented as the first one to have obtained the eschatological promises noted in Heb 11 (cf. 2:10). This is not to suggest

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<sup>120</sup> So also James Kurianal, *Jesus Our High Priest: Ps 110,4 as the Substructure of Heb 5,1–7,28* (European University Studies 693; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 70.

that the joy that Jesus anticipated is reducible to the promises referred to in Heb 11.<sup>121</sup> Yet, given his place in this list and the lengths to which the author has gone to identify him with those who have placed their hope in him, it would be exceedingly strange if he thought that Jesus himself did not obtain the enduring city, the heavenly homeland, *and* the better resurrection promised to those being sanctified (cf. 2:11). That Jesus comes at that head of the list of those who were faithful and stand to inherit the eternal promises only serves to give the audience confidence if it is assumed that Jesus has come into possession of those promises. A denial of Jesus' resurrection would ruin the entire rhetorical thrust of the litany.

The foregoing discussion suggests that the author of Hebrews has not ignored Jesus' resurrection. But is this category distinct from his exaltation to the royal throne in heaven for this author? Additionally, does the resurrection play a significant role in the christological reflection of this text? For the balance of this chapter I argue that Jesus' resurrection is not only a moment distinct from his exaltation, but proves a fundamental assumption for the author's christological claim that Jesus serves as the great high priest who has passed through the heavens and now sits on the throne at God's right hand.

### ***3.5 Perfected Life and Jesus' High-Priestly Prerequisites***

Commentators often recognize that Heb 5:1–10 is the writer's attempt to lay out Jesus' prerequisites for high-priestly office. Two key qualifications are often recognized:

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<sup>121</sup> For example, the exaltation to the messianic throne at God's right hand and the redemption of his brothers and sisters must also be taken into account.

1) his ability to sympathize with those for whom he ministers, and 2) his call by God.<sup>122</sup> I argue that the author's use of perfection language within the argument for Jesus' priestly status (i.e., 4:14–8.2) emphasizes another qualification especially pertinent to the particular high priesthood Jesus holds—a life that endures.<sup>123</sup>

### ***3.5.1 Jesus' Perfection in Hebrews 5–7 as a Postmortem State***

In 5:8–10 the author claims that Jesus had to undergo suffering as a prerequisite for attaining perfection. Perfection, in turn, is a necessary qualification for him to become the source of everlasting salvation (i.e., to become the everlasting high priest).<sup>124</sup> Thus the writer lays out a logical and temporal sequence of events that culminates in the elevation of Jesus to the office of high priest in the order of Melchizedek. Jesus' possession of perfected life is one of the distinguishing features that qualifies him for that priestly office. This suggestion implies another—perfection is *not* something inclusive of Jesus' priestly ministry and heavenly exaltation to the throne at God's right hand.<sup>125</sup> It is something he first had to possess in order to then become the heavenly high priest who,

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<sup>122</sup> So, for instance, Bruce, *Hebrews*, 122–26; Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer (Hebr 1–6)* (EKKNT 17/1; Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1990), 268; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 113; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (12th ed.; KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 214; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 61.

<sup>123</sup> There is little consensus on the meaning of “perfection” language in Hebrews (see the recent summary and discussion in Kurianal, *Our High Priest*, 219–27). One of the more influential views is that of David Peterson. Peterson argues that “perfection” language with reference to Jesus is a vocational category closely linked with Jesus' ability to sympathize with his people. As such, perfection involves a process encompassing the entire sequence of events from Jesus' life on earth to exaltation at God's right hand (David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the “Epistle to the Hebrews”* [SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], 66–73; so also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 86–87). Peterson is right that perfection is related to Jesus' priestly vocation, but wrong in when and where he locates it. Jesus' perfection does not include his exaltation, rather it is a prerequisite for his entry into heaven as the great high priest (see also, Kurianal, *Our High Priest*, 230–33).

<sup>124</sup> The author clarifies this in 7:24–25 where he states that the everlasting salvation obtained by Jesus depends upon his having become an everlasting high priest.

<sup>125</sup> Contra Attridge, *Hebrews*, 87; Peterson, *Perfection*, 66–73.

after making a cleansing for sin, was invited to sit on the throne at God's right hand (cf. Heb 1:3, 10:12). Three observations support these claims.

First, a similar logic appears to be in play in Heb 2:9–11, where perfection language (τελειόω) first occurs in the homily. In 2:9 Jesus is crowned with glory and honor “on account of his suffering death” (διὰ τὸ παθήμα τοῦ θανάτου). In view of the author's development of the theme of the righteous sufferer's faithful endurance in the time of testing as the ground for obtaining the reward, 2:9 looks like a highly condensed summary of that pattern in the case of Jesus. As the writer's argument develops, it becomes clear that Jesus' suffering *qua* suffering is not the author's point. His focus rests on the faithful endurance of the one who suffers. The glorification here is therefore likely to be envisioned as the result of Jesus' faithful endurance, not of a pro forma experience of death (cf. 12:2).

The inchoate thought of 2:9 is expanded and explained in 2:10–11 along lines that further suggest this conclusion. The writer claims in 2:10 that in leading many sons into glory, it was fitting for God to perfect (ἔπρεπεν αὐτῷ ... τελειῶσαι) the one Son, the ἀρχηγός of salvation for the many, *through* sufferings (διὰ παθημάτων). The fittingness of this perfection through suffering is explained in 2:11. Both the one Son who sanctifies (ὁ τε ... ἀγιάζων) and the many sons who are being sanctified (καὶ οἱ ἀγιαζόμενοι) are all from one. I argued above that the all being “from one” likely alludes to Adam. Thus the many sons (who are children of Adam though also, more specifically, the seed of Abraham, 2:16) and the one Son are all blood-and-flesh human beings, the very beings to whom dominion over the world to come was promised (cf.

2:5–9). The point seems to be that, in his humanity, the one Son must endure the suffering that is characteristic of his many siblings before he can become the one who sanctifies the many that need to be sanctified if they are to enter the the glory of the world to come (cf. 2:17, where the Son is made like his siblings in order to become the high priest who makes an offering that atones for the sins of the people). That the Son's being perfected through suffering is necessary for the salvation of the many suggests that the perfection of the Son stands between his own endurance of suffering and his becoming the high priest whose service sanctifies his siblings.

Second, in 5:8–10 there is an implicit logical and sequential relationship between the process of learning obedience through suffering (5:8) and the state of perfection Jesus is said to have attained (5:9; cf. 2:10)—Jesus' perfection *follows* his suffering. Suffering, that is, entails a process of which perfection is the end result. Thus, Jesus can be said to have been perfected only *after* his suffering had ceased. This further suggests that Jesus was not perfect until after his death.

Third, the two aorist passive participles in 5:9–10, both of which function adverbially in relation to ἐγένετο, imply a temporal, sequential development from suffering, to perfection, to being appointed high priest. It was *after* Jesus was perfected that he became the source of everlasting salvation for all those who obey him, *being at that time* appointed by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. The broader argument of Hebrews supplies significant support for this interpretation.

In Heb 7:23–25 the writer contrasts those who serve as priests after the order of Aaron with Jesus' priestly service. The primary point of contrast concerns the respective



relationships of Jesus and the Levitical priests to the power of death. Both Jesus and the Levitical priests experienced death. The crux of the distinction is that death prevents the Aaronic priests from “remaining” (παρᾰμένειν). Jesus, by way of contrast, “remains forever” (μένειν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) and, because of this fact (διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτόν), possesses an everlasting priesthood. That is, as 7:25 clearly states, Jesus “always lives” (πάντοτε ζῶν) to intercede for his people. Jesus and the Levitical priests share the experience of death. The difference is that the latter are hindered from remaining in their office by death, while Jesus, because he remains forever, possesses his office eternally.

The contrast between Jesus and the priests of Aaron’s order reaches its climax in 7:28. On the one hand, the priests in Aaron’s order are said to be weak (as has just been shown in vv. 23–25, they die and cannot overcome death’s power). Jesus, the high priest appointed by God to Melchizedek’s order, on the other hand, is the Son who is in the state of “perfection” forever. In keeping with this context, the term *perfection* connotes the attribute of enduring life that Jesus has. This is what distinguishes him from the other, weak high priests. All priests, according to the author, are called by God and can sympathize with those for whom they minister. What makes Jesus different, and fit for a different priesthood, is the fact that, unlike the other priests, he is no longer subject to mortality; rather, like Melchizedek, he “remains” and “lives” (7:3, 8).

If this is right, then the logic of the argument indicates that Jesus' perfection is the prerequisite that qualifies him to serve as the everlasting high priest.<sup>126</sup> Precisely because Jesus' perfection ensures that he will never forfeit his ministry to death, he can be appointed by God to serve in Melchizedek's eternal priestly order.<sup>127</sup> Yet, since Jesus did in fact die, everything the writer has just predicated about Jesus' perfection and subsequent ministry can only apply to him *after* his death. Before he died, Jesus *was* liable to the power of death. He was made like his siblings in every respect (2:17–18). Only at some point after he died, then, did he attain the state of perfection (i.e., possess the kind of life that is not liable to the power of death) and only then was he qualified to become the source of everlasting salvation.

The logical and temporal relationships noted above in the discussion of 5:8–10, therefore, find additional support in the argumentation of 7:23–28. As the writer works out in Heb 7 the particulars of the argument he presented *in nuce* in 5:8–10, he emphasizes the importance of Jesus' perfected state. This perfection—which includes Jesus' ever enduring/remaining life—qualifies him to be a better high priest of Melchizedek's order.

But can a moment be identified when Jesus came into possession of this enduring life and thus became qualified to be the heavenly high priest? Several commentators

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<sup>126</sup> See too the discussion of Kurianal, *Our High Priest*, 230–33, who also closely associates Jesus' perfection with his resurrection; and Walter Edward Brooks, "The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBL* 89 (1970): 205–14, esp. 206–8.

<sup>127</sup> Kurianal rightly comments that Jesus' eternal life "is the most relevant aspect of the ideal state necessary for being declared High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This perfection makes it possible for him to be a priest forever" (*Ibid.*, 232).

argue that such an identification is not possible.<sup>128</sup> There are clues in the text, however, that suggest otherwise.

### ***3.5.2 Perfection and Jesus' Resurrection***

The writer comments in 8:4 that if Jesus were on earth he would not even (οὐδ' ἄν) be a priest, let alone the high priest he is confessed to be, because priests exist who offer gifts in accordance with the Law.<sup>129</sup> In keeping with the discussion above about the relationship between Jesus' perfection and priestly status, 8:4 seems to say that Jesus was *not* a priest on earth. In fact, 8:4 clearly locates Jesus' priestly ministry in heaven, after his life and death on earth. The writer's logic is fairly clear here. The authority of the Law remains valid on earth, and on earth a lawfully appointed order of priests already exists. Therefore, Jesus, being from the tribe of Judah (7:14), cannot serve in that priesthood. What then qualifies Jesus to serve as a priest? As was shown above, Jesus can be a priest because he has the necessary qualification for another order of priesthood—that of Melchizedek, a priesthood that one has not by genealogy (as stipulated by the Law), but by the possession of enduring life.

There was a time before which Jesus could not even be a priest, let alone the great high priest. Before his life and death on earth he was not perfect and, because of his tribal lineage, could not lawfully serve as a priest. Now, however, Jesus is the high priest who passed through the heavens (4:14) and, after making atonement, sat down at God's right hand (1:3; 8:1; 10:12). Perfection, as the requisite qualification for him to become the

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<sup>128</sup> E.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 147; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 294; and especially Peterson, *Perfection*, 97.

<sup>129</sup> See especially Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 405.

heavenly high priest, stands between Jesus' death and elevation to the heavenly priesthood. In light of the discussion above about Jesus' faith when tested receiving the reward of the better resurrection, the most likely candidate for this moment is Jesus' resurrection. After his death, God brought Jesus out of the realm of death and into a life that will endure forever—into perfection. Only after this point can Jesus be said to be perfected and thus qualified to be the heavenly high priest.<sup>130</sup>

As a point of clarification, I am not arguing that the language of perfection in Hebrews serves as technical terminology for resurrection. Perfection language is broader than resurrection and likely has to do with the ability of the human being to come into God's presence. Thus, when the author says in 7:19 that the Law made nothing perfect (cf. 7:11; 9:9; 10:1), he immediately adds that what has come about through the work of Jesus provides God's people with a better hope by which they can draw near to God (ἐγγίζομεν τῷ θεῷ). Perfection is therefore closely bound up with the purification of the human being such that humanity and God's presence can dwell together. Perfection has to do with making the human being fit to enter the world to come. The eschatological resurrection, insofar as this involves the glorification of the mortal body so that it can live forever, is an element of the perfection of the human being, but the author is clear that the

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<sup>130</sup> A similar account of when Jesus became a high priest, how he became high priest (i.e., by the glorification of his human body), and where he served was offered in the sixteenth century by Faustus Socinus (see the summary of Socinian interpretation of Heb 7 in Bruce Demarest, *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7, 1–10 from the Reformation to the Present* [BGBE 19; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1976] 20–24, see esp. 22 n. 2). Whatever one takes to be the relative merits or demerits of Socinus' anti-Trinitarian agenda, his emphasis on the humanity of Jesus appears to have enabled him to trace the logic of the argument in Heb 7 with particular clarity. See also Brooks, "Christ's Sacrifice in Hebrews," 205–8.

internal part of the human being (conscience/heart/spirit) also needs to be purified or perfected (cf. 9:9; 10:2, 22; 12:23). This later point probably informs the author's comment in 10:14 that Jesus' high-priestly ministry has perfected all those who are being sanctified. Thus the author can exhort his audience to approach God's throne with confidence right now (4:16) and encourage them to recognize that they have already come to the heavenly Zion and participate in worship with the heavenly congregation (12:22–24), while also stressing that they still await their inheritance (1:14; 9:28) and will only be perfected together with all God's people (11:39–40). As those living in the last days, they have been perfected—in particular their conscience has been purified (cf. 10:2, 22), and thus they can draw near to God—and yet they wait to be perfected so that they can inherit the world to come and, like the Son, dwell fully in God's presence.

In any case, if the larger hypothesis just suggested is correct, then Jesus' resurrection to the fullness of perfection forms a central plank in the priestly Christology of the letter. A careful account of the argument for Jesus' high-priestly status in spite of the Law's genealogical requirements substantiates the validity of this theory.

### ***3.5.2.1 The Royal Son Became High Priest: Psalm 110:4 and Jesus' Resurrection Life***

Careful attention to the writer's use of Ps 110:4 and the argumentation of Heb 7 supports the hypothesis that Jesus' resurrection is foundational for Jesus' high-priestly status. Specifically, the writer's comment that Jesus "arose" in the likeness of Melchizedek serves logically as the middle term he relies on to justify his christological claim that just as God called the ἄνθρωπος Jesus to be the exalted royal Son (Ps 2:7; Heb 5:5), God also called him to be priest "forever" (Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6; cf. 5:1).

The related questions of how the writer came to apply Ps 110:4 to Jesus and how he came to link Ps 2:7 and Ps 110:4 have long drawn scholarly attention. Some have speculated about a possible liturgical background for these links.<sup>131</sup> Others have argued that the author understood Jesus' priestly ministry as an aspect of his status as Son.<sup>132</sup> We will probably never know exactly what led the author to make these links. Nevertheless, his argument for the Son's priestly status allows some sound deductions regarding how he set about trying to convince others to affirm this conclusion. He is especially reliant upon the confession of Jesus' everlasting life as an implicit foundation upon which he builds his case that Jesus is both Son and priest. Significantly, the extent to which his argument exhibits tension regarding the combination of the offices of reigning Son and high priest in the person of Jesus further indicates that he has neither conflated Jesus' coming into possession of enduring life with his exaltation, nor conceived of Jesus' priestly status as implicit in his status as royal Son.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> For only a few examples see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 99–103 (who argues for a notion of angels as priests possibly influencing liturgical or exegetical traditions known to the author), and Ernst Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk: Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief* (4th ed.; FRLANT 55; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 124–25.

<sup>132</sup> See, e.g., George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews: Translation, Comment and Conclusions* (AB 36; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), 94–97; Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:292; Harald Hegermann, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (THKNT 16; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988), 119–20; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 64; Deborah W. Rooke, “Jesus as Royal Priest: Reflections on the Interpretation of the Melchizedek Tradition in Heb 7,” *Bib* 81 (2000), 81–94; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (3d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1903), 124.

<sup>133</sup> H. -M. Schenke has perceptively observed, “Die Einsetzung [Jesu] zum himmlischen Hohenpriester ist ja auch für den Gottessohn nichts selbstverständliches und keineswegs mit der Rückkehr des herabgestiegenen Präexistenten in seine eigentliche und ursprüngliche Gottheit automatisch verbunden” (“Erwägungen zum Rätsel des Hebräerbriefes,” in *Neues Testament und christliche Existenz: Festschrift für Herbert Braun zum 70. Geburtstag am 4. Mai 1973* [ed. Hans Dieter Betz and Luise Schottroff; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1973], 421–37, here 429–30).

### ***3.5.2.1.1 A High Priest from the Tribe of Judah***

The author's argumentative strategy for Jesus' elevation to the priesthood strongly suggests that he does not assume that Jesus' priestly ministry is a necessary entailment of his status as reigning Son. As was noted above, his argument highlights a real problem for Jesus' priestly status—his genealogy. While Jesus' tribal lineage is arguably important for his status as royal Son, the author recognizes that it should prevent him from holding priestly office since Moses said nothing about a priest coming from the tribe of Judah (7:13–14; cf. 8:4).

The fact of Jesus' descent from Judah appears to push the writer to demonstrate how Jesus can be a priest *in spite of* his genealogy. Yet, if the author understands Jesus' priestly ministry as an extension of his status as reigning Son, he has chosen a particularly inappropriate way of explaining this. That is, if Jesus' priesthood is founded upon or an extension of his sonship, then Jesus' tribal lineage ought to be a factor working in the writer's favor. Instead, he seeks to demonstrate the very possibility that the royal Son can be a priest in spite of his genealogy. Jesus' role as priest here seems therefore to be distinct from—i.e., not predicated upon—his status as Son.

In keeping with this assessment, the argument of 7:1–8:2 appears designed to show that, irrespective of the Law's prescriptions, someone outside of the tribe of Levi can in fact serve as a priest because *another priesthood exists*. The mention of Melchizedek and his priestly order in the oracle of Ps 110:4 provides the author with an example of another priesthood that, as his interpretation of Gen 14 indicates, depends not upon tribal descent, but on the quality of life one possesses.

Melchizedek—being without father, without mother, that is, *without a genealogy* and *without beginning or end of days*—is not a priest because of his lineage (he has none, cf. 7:6), but because he “remains” (μένει, 7.3) or “lives” (ζῆ, 7.8). The author has found in Ps 110:4 a promise that there will be another priest in Melchizedek’s order. Such a priest, he reasons, will have the right to serve in this order not because of tribal genealogy, but because he *arises* (ἀνιστάνειν) in the likeness (ἡ ὁμοιότης) of Melchizedek (7:15).

### **3.5.2.1.2 Arising to the Eternal, Heavenly Priesthood**

The term *arising* can simply refer to a state of affairs coming into being or to an individual taking an office.<sup>134</sup> This latter sense is almost certainly the meaning in 7:11. But the writer seems to use this language in 7:15 to indicate something more, an inference suggested by his explication of what it means that “another priest” (that is, a different priest—one outside of the tribe of Levi<sup>135</sup>) will arise in the “likeness” of Melchizedek. He argues in 7:16 that, like Melchizedek, this other priest belongs to this priesthood by virtue of the fact that he possesses the power of an indestructible life (κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου).<sup>136</sup> Over against the qualification of tribal genealogy

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<sup>134</sup> Many commentators argue that this is all the term implies here. So, e.g., Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 373; Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer (Hebr 7,1–10,18)* (EKKNT 17/2; Zurich: Benzinger Verlag, 1993), 38; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 96.

<sup>135</sup> In this context the classical sense of ἕτερος as “different” is evident. So, e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 200; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 165.

<sup>136</sup> See David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBLMS 18; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 146–47. Hay suggests it is a “resurrection-exaltation” conviction that lies behind this argument. Yet the tension between Jesus’ priestly status and the link between exaltation and royal sonship in Hebrews suggest that this assessment too quickly conflates resurrection and exaltation.



prescribed by the Law, Jesus and Melchizedek are qualified for their priestly offices because they possess the kind of life that remains forever.<sup>137</sup>

Yet, as was noted above, prior to his death, Jesus' life was subject to death's power. He can only be said to have a life that remains, a life that is indestructible, *after* God saved him out of the realm of death. It therefore follows that the affirmation of his resurrection must underlie the logic of the author's argument here. The language of another priest "arising" in 7:15 is thus a reference to Jesus' resurrection.<sup>138</sup> The author has created a brilliant double entendre.<sup>139</sup> Another priest has arisen—namely Jesus, who, in spite of the Law's prescriptions with respect to tribal lineage, is qualified to be a priest because God heard his cry and rewarded his faithful suffering with the promise of the better resurrection life.

One other piece of evidence indicates that the key here is Jesus' possession of a human life that is fit for heaven. Melchizedek is depicted here with language that suggests he is an angelic being—a priestly spirit—and, in keeping with this assessment, the Melchizedekian priesthood is the heavenly priesthood.

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<sup>137</sup> This is widely recognized (cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 199; DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 271; Hay, *Glory*, 147; Koester, *Hebrews*, 360–1; Michel, *Hebräer*, 272).

<sup>138</sup> In the main, scholars understand the author's comment about Jesus' life as a reference to his ascension and/or exaltation (e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 203; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 379; Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 2:45–46). A few commentators, though, rightly detect a resurrection logic in play here (see Bruce, *Hebrews*, 169; DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 271; Koester, *Hebrews*, 361, William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951], 116). Notably Koester considers the possibility that ἀνίστημι might refer to Jesus' resurrection, but concludes that the term probably points primarily to his being elevated to the office of priest (*Hebrews*, 355). Paul J. Kobelski does not note ἀνίστημι, but he rightly notes the importance of the resurrection as Jesus' qualification to serve as a priest who resembles Melchizedek (*Melchizedek and Melchireša'* [CBQMS 10; Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981], 118–19; cf. Kurianal, *Our High Priest*, 111).

<sup>139</sup> For an analogous instance of this same word play see Acts 3:22 and 26. I am grateful to David A. deSilva for drawing my attention to these texts.

A substantial amount of literary evidence exists demonstrating that some Jews during the Second Temple period believed in an angelic priesthood in heaven.<sup>140</sup> Given the author's own description of the angels as "ministers" (λειτουργοί, 1:7), and as "ministering spirits" (λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα, 1:14), it is virtually certain that he also considers the angels to be heavenly priests.

This conclusion is supported by two additional considerations. First, in the Septuagintal traditions nearly every instance of a word from the group based around the λειτουργ- root occurs in a context related in some way to the activity of the priests in the tabernacle/temple.<sup>141</sup> Second, excluding 1:7 and 14, the other four occurrences of this terminology in Hebrews (cf. 8:2, 6; 9:21; 10:11) are in step with the pattern established in the Greek translations. In Heb 8:2 and 6 the words refer to Jesus' priestly service. In 9:21 λειτουργία occurs with reference to the implements used by the priests, while in 10:11 λειτουργεῖν is employed for the act of offering sacrifices. When, therefore, the author describes the angels as "ministering" spirits, there can be little doubt that he envisions them engaging in acts of priestly service.

It is also highly likely that the author of Hebrews considers Melchizedek to be one of those ministering spirits. First, the writer's strange statement that Melchizedek is

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<sup>140</sup> It is common in Jewish apocalyptic ascension texts to view heaven as a temple and the angels as its priests (see esp. Himmelfarb). The Qumran text known as *The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (4Q400–4Q407) also attests this view. For example, 4Q400 frag. 1, col. 1, line 20 where the heavenly beings are called "priests of the heights of height" (כֹּהֲנֵי מְרוֹמֵי רוֹם), cf. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 89). For a few other examples see *Jub* 31:14 and the *T. Levi* 3:4–6. For a broader survey of relevant evidence see Rachel Eilior, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (trans. David Louvish; Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 165–200.

<sup>141</sup> H. -C. Hahn, "λειτουργέω," *NIDNTT* 3:551–53.

“without father, without mother, that is, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor an end of life” (7:3, cf. 7:8) makes good sense if the author conceives of him as an immortal angel.<sup>142</sup> Especially relevant here is the fact that Melchizedek is described as having “life.” As was seen in the discussion above of ascension accounts, enduring life is frequently a definitive attribute of the heavenly realms.

Second, Melchizedek is plainly contrasted with ἄνθρωποι, who, as one expects from ἄνθρωποι, are subject to death (7:8). As someone who is a priest of God, but who has enduring life and is not an ἄνθρωπος, Melchizedek is most likely thought of here as an angel.

Third, this hypothesis explains why the writer can appeal to Ps 110:4 even though it does not, *prima facie*, provide an especially good proof text for the point he is trying to establish—that Jesus is the great *high* priest (6:20; 7:26, 28; 8:1). Ps 110:4 speaks of someone being appointed a priest (ἱερεύς) in Melchizedek’s order, but it says nothing of that one being a high priest (ἀρχιερεύς).<sup>143</sup> While there is evidence in the literature of

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<sup>142</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey has argued that in light of a Greco-Roman background, this language is best understood as language relevant to Greco-Roman deities (“Without Beginning of Days or End of Life” [Hebrews 7:3]: Topos for a True Deity,” *CBQ* 53 [1991]: 439–55). Neyrey claims that, “Investigations of the Jewish background of Heb 7:3 . . . entirely miss the sense of Hellenistic technical terminology used here” (Ibid., 439). Such a sharp dichotomy between Jewish and Greco-Roman milieus, however, seems unwarranted. Nor is it clear that the evidence that Neyrey collects in order to show that the kind of language used in Heb 7:3 was applied to Greco-Roman gods necessarily implies such a divide. I see no reason why it would not make very good sense for a Jewish author, particularly one who appears to be quite familiar with the larger Greco-Roman literary and cultural environment in which he lives, to apply these *topoi* to angelic beings.

<sup>143</sup> Various suggestions are offered to explain this fact. Bruce argues the high-priestly language, which cannot be derived from Ps 110:4, arises from the author’s understanding of Jesus’ redemptive work “as the antitypical fulfillment of the sacrificial ritual of the Day of Atonement, where the high priest in person was required to officiate” (*Hebrews*, 87 n. 85; cf. Hay, *Glory*, 145). Ellingworth suggests that the author does not “make any significant distinction between ἱερεύς and ἀρχιερεύς” (*Hebrews*, 183, see also his claim that in 8:3 the author “interprets ἱερεύς in Ps. 110:4 as ἀρχιερεύς, without stopping to explain or justify

early Judaism that Melchizedek could be identified as a *high priest*,<sup>144</sup> the author plainly does not imagine him in these terms: Melchizedek is only an ἱερεὺς in Gen 14:18 (7:1), albeit an eternal one (7:3); and he stresses that Melchizedek’s priestly order has one and only one *high priest*—Jesus (cf. 7:26–28).<sup>145</sup> How can such an argument work? I suggest the key is the exaltation of the humanity over the angels.<sup>146</sup> Every *high priest* is called

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this transition,” 405; cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 154; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 64). The contrast with Melchizedek and Jesus as the one high priest of that order, however, suggests the writer is more careful here to distinguish between a priest and a high priest than is often thought.

<sup>144</sup> See *Tg. Neof.* Gen 14:18, which in the Vatican MS refers to Melchizedek as a “priest who serves in the high priesthood” (כהן משמש בכהנתה רבתה); cf. *m. Hor.* 3:4 where the phrase כהן משמש denotes the high priest; so also Jastrow, s.v. “כהן”). It is worth noting that MS M avoids locating Melchizedek in the high priesthood (instead he simply serves לאלהא עיליין; see Alejandro Díez Macho, *Neophyti 1: Targum Palestinense MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana. Tomo I. Génesis* [Textos y Estudios Consejo de Redacción 7; Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968], 75). Genesis 14:18 in *Tg. Onq.* even avoids the term כהן. This departure from the language of the biblical text probably indicates a response to early Christian attempts to pit Melchizedek’s priestly status against that of the Levitical priesthood. See Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text (Based on A. Sperber’s Edition)* (New York: Ktav, 1982), 89–90 n. 25.

<sup>145</sup> To my knowledge, Second Temple literature does not attest any explicit identification of angels as “high priests” in heaven. There is, though, substantial evidence for certain angels being depicted in high-priestly ways (e.g., in high-priestly garb, performing rites that mirror high-priestly activities, and standing in the inner sanctum of heaven; cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 100 n. 240). Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 19–38, is especially helpful on this point. See also Mary Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys*, 152–53, 278, who notes that Michael is presented in high-priestly terms in *3 Baruch*. The angelic Melchizedek in 11QMelchizedek appears to be closely linked with the eschatological atonement which again suggests a high-priestly concept in play (see Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchireša’*, 64–74).

<sup>146</sup> Eric Mason makes a similar point when he responds to those like Fred Horton (see Fred L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* [SNTSMS 30; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976]) who posit that the argument in Heb 1 that Jesus is higher than the angels makes it unlikely that the author would compare Jesus with Melchizedek if he thought of the latter as an angel. Mason comments, “Heb 1 can be read as a clear assertion of the priority of the eternal Son, the one bearing the glory and essence of the Father and who is superior to the angels in every way, thus making it safe to compare Jesus to an angel (without again stressing the latter’s subjugation) later in the epistle” (Eric F. Mason, “*You are a Priest Forever*”: *Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* [StDJ 74; Leiden: Brill, 2008], 202). Eskola (*Messiah and Throne*, 210–11) also recognizes that the logic of Hebrews’ argument on this point highlights Jesus’ Davidic lineage as a key element of contrast with the angels. My argument regarding the import of the ontological distinction between humans and angels in Heb 1–2 only

from among *humanity* and serves on behalf of humanity (πάς γὰρ ἀρχιερεὺς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων λαμβανόμενος ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων καθίσταται τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, Heb 5:1). Thus the author never presses Ps 110:4 to say Jesus is a high priest, nor does he need to do so. Jesus is the high priest of heavenly order of priests for the same reason that he sits upon the throne never offered to any angelic spirit: he is an ἄνθρωπος. Melchizedek is not a high priest because he is not from among ἄνθρωποι. The high-priestly status of Jesus is not something foisted upon Ps 110:4 by the author, but a deduction drawn from the supposition that Melchizedek is an angel.

Fourth, the emphasis placed by the author for Jesus' being the great high priest *in heaven*, not on earth (8:1–2, 4; cf. 4:14), fits together well with this theory.

Fifth, the author's cryptic comment in 13:2 that some have entertained angels summons Abraham for biblically literate auditors. This is all the more the case if Abraham's exchange with Melchizedek is taken by the author to be an exchange with an angel.

Sixth, it should also be remembered that we have solid literary evidence from the Second Temple period indicating that some Jews thought of Melchizedek as a heavenly

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adds more weight and clarity to observations like those of Mason and Eskola. The writer's claim in Heb 1–2 that the Son is higher than the angelic spirits *because* he is a glorified human being sets up a presumption in the homily that, after his resurrection, Jesus would be higher in status than any angelic being to whom he might be compared. Whatever the nature of the priestly service of the angelic Melchizedek, Jesus' priestly service is greater.

figure.<sup>147</sup> It is entirely possible that the author of Hebrews, therefore, could assume that Melchizedek is an angelic being.

Seventh, this hypothesis helps explain how Melchizedek is *like* the Son of God (7:3), while Jesus, who *is* the Son of God (4:14), arises in the likeness of Melchizedek (7:15). The Son in Heb 1, as was noted, has divine attributes—he is a preexistent, heavenly being. This Son of God, though, is also the Son of Man—the human being Jesus (2:5–18). In his humanity he was subject to death. If Melchizedek is an ever-living angelic spirit, then he is a heavenly being, a being like the Son of God. The Son of Heb 1, though, is also the human being Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus, especially if this is conceived of in terms of the kind of human glorification described in the ascension accounts above, would result in the Jesus being like Melchizedek—that is, possessing a heavenly, enduring life.

### **3.5.2.2 Summary: *The Perfected High Priest from Judah's Tribe***

The preceding exegesis has sought to explicate the logic underlying the argument of Heb 5–7 that Jesus, the Judahite, is also the great high priest in heaven. I have argued that the writer's link between the Ps 2:7 and Ps 110:4 does not lie in an intrinsic connection between "Son" and "priest." Rather, it depends upon his perception of the

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<sup>147</sup> For an early case defending this position in light of the evidence from Qumran see M. de Jonge and J. S. van der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *NTS* 12 (1966): 301–26, here 314–23. See also the similar discussion in Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchireša'*, 115–29. Kobelski argues that Melchizedek was identified with the chief angel Michael at Qumran and was probably thought of as the heavenly high priest (64–74), but curiously he suggests that while Melchizedek is likely a heavenly being in Hebrews, it is not clear that he is an angel (126–27). For a more thorough and recent discussion, particularly in light of current research on the Dead Sea Scrolls see Mason, "*You are a Priest Forever*," esp. 164–68. Mason concludes that Melchizedek is almost certainly thought to be an angelic priest by the author of Hebrews.

coherence between the oracle of God in scripture about an *everlasting* priest in the order of Melchizedek, and the affirmation that God raised Jesus from the dead to an indestructible life. Jesus is not qualified to be a priest because of his tribal genealogy, though this genealogy is appropriate for his royal status, because this genealogy prevents Jesus from serving as a legitimate priest on earth.

The qualification Jesus possesses to be the high priest that he is confessed to be is his perfection—i.e., his enduring life. More specifically, the mortality of his humanity, which did suffer death, has been transformed. After his death he arose to an indestructible life—i.e., resurrection life. Because he always lives, he is not only fit to dwell in the heavenly realms, but also qualified to become (ἐγένετο, 5:9; γενόμενος, 6:20) the source of eternal salvation—the everlasting high priest in the order of Melchizedek. Because he has been perfected, Jesus is the ἄνθρωπος whom God called to be both the royal Son (the Christ) seated on the throne at his right hand *and* the ἄνθρωπος who serves forever as the *high* priest of the eternal, heavenly priesthood (5:5–6; 8:1–2).

### ***3.6 The Days of the Son's Flesh and Perfected Spirits in Heaven: Hebrews 5:7 and 12:23***

The findings of both the second chapter of this study and the present one indicate that the dualism of Hebrews is a dualism between the holy, pure realm of heaven and life and the impure, corruptible realm of the earth and death. I have argued that the author envisions the barrier between these realms (viz. sin and mortality) being overcome when destructible life is perfected. The glorification of flesh-and-blood humanity results in

some kind of incorruptible humanity. Because Jesus arose to that kind of glorified humanity, he can take his humanity into heaven and be elevated above the angels.

A handful of passages in the homily, as traditionally interpreted, appear on their surface to disallow this larger thesis—Heb 5:7, 10:20, and 12:23. I address 10:20 in detail in section 4.3.4 below. Here, though, a word about 5:7 and 12:23 is in order.

In Heb 5:7 the writer says the suffering that Jesus endured occurred “in the days of his flesh” (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ). As in 2:14 the term σάρξ here clearly points to the humanity of the Son.<sup>148</sup> In the course of becoming the source of eternal salvation, the heavenly Son entered the world and took on a human body (cf. 2:14; 10:5). Thus the phrase is often understood to connote Jesus’ mortal or earthly existence as contrasted with his heavenly existence.<sup>149</sup> For some, the language implies a sharp dualism between the Son’s temporary, mortal embodiment and the laying aside of his flesh at his death in order to release his spirit to ascend into heaven.<sup>150</sup> Others, such as F. F. Bruce, suggest that the “expression . . . emphasizes the conditions of human weakness of which [Jesus] partook during his earthly life” but “does not imply that his human condition came to an end with his exaltation to the right hand of God.”<sup>151</sup>

The emphasis on Jesus’ suffering, crying out, and exercising faith in God leave no doubt that in this context “in the days of his flesh” includes the kind of embodiment that marked his earthly life. But does the language plainly contrast Jesus’ flesh with his

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<sup>148</sup> This is universally recognized (so, for example, Johnson, *Hebrews*, 145; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 109).

<sup>149</sup> E.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 149; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 287.

<sup>150</sup> So Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 1:297; Thompson, *Beginnings*, 107; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 42;

<sup>151</sup> Bruce, *Hebrews*, 126.



present, heavenly existence? This is often assumed, particularly since this interpretation appears to cohere with the humiliation-exaltation/slaughter-presentation nodes presumed to structure the Christology and soteriology of Hebrews. The way the argument of Heb 1–2 contrasts the exaltation of blood-and-flesh humanity with the spiritual existence of the angels, and the role in Heb 5–7 of Jesus’ resurrection as a qualification for Jesus’ high-priestly status, already problematize the assumption of a simple humiliation-exaltation christological structure in Hebrews. A more careful and complex narrative structure is apparent. The preexistent Son takes on blood and flesh, dies, is resurrected, ascends to heaven as the great high priest, presents his offering, and sits down on the throne at God’s right hand.

Clearly 5:7 implies there was a time when the Son had flesh and a time when the Son did not have flesh. But in light of the emerging picture of the presence and role of Jesus’ resurrection, it must be noted that the statement need not be taken as implying a distinction between Jesus’ earthly existence and his present, heavenly existence. To be sure, in this context, the suffering and crying out are experiences the Son had on earth. He had these experiences as a human being. These were experiences he had in the flesh. But this makes sense since, prior to the incarnation, the Son could never have experienced suffering, faithful endurance, and death. The preincarnate Son was, like the angels, unable to suffer and die. Once he came into the world as a blood-and-flesh human being, he was subject to the weakness of the human condition. Thus, only “in the days of his flesh” would he be subject to suffering.

Significantly, however, the statement “in the days of his flesh” does not entail the conclusion that his fleshly existence must have come to an end when he returned to heaven.<sup>152</sup> This is a possible implication, but it is neither a necessary implication nor the only implication. “In the days of his flesh” can be understood as the incarnate state, without requiring an absolute dichotomy between flesh/earth and spirit/heaven. Plainly the Son could not suffer before the incarnation, before having flesh. But to note that he suffered as part of the incarnation does not necessarily imply that once he overcame suffering and death, the incarnation also came to an end. Given the argument of this study, the fundamental distinction between the days of the Son’s flesh and the days when the Son did not have flesh is that between the Son’s preexistence and the Son’s incarnation. The particular emphasis on the Son’s suffering in Heb 5:7–8 clearly locates that suffering during his incarnation before his arising to indestructible life. The context, that is, clarifies that the suffering was part of the period of the Son’s existence in the flesh. The statement “in the days of his flesh,” however, cannot, by itself, be pressed to imply his incarnate existence before his death in contrast to his exalted, spiritual existence after his death. The argument of Heb 1–2 makes such an implication unlikely.

One might further object, however, that the vision of heaven presented by the author later in the homily depicts righteous spirits who have been made perfect worshipping God in the company of the angels (Heb 12:23). These spirits are mostly likely

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<sup>152</sup> I am grateful to my colleague Hans Arneson for bringing this point to my attention.

the spirits of the human righteous whose spiritual perfection allows them to dwell in heaven.

This sort of vision aligns well with some instances of Jewish eschatological speculation in the early Common Era concerning the postmortem human condition in the ages prior to the eschaton. It is clear, for example, in *L.A.B.* that the spirits of the righteous are kept by God until the final age and the corresponding resurrection occur. At that point the spirits and the dust of their bodies are reunited (*L.A.B.* 23:13) Similarly, in Rev 6 the souls of the righteous martyrs are in heaven under the altar (Rev 6:9) apparently awaiting the resurrection (cf. Rev 20:4–5). That these souls are waiting for the resurrection suggests that their spiritual existence in heaven is not thought of here as a resurrection. The souls, that is, are waiting to be reunited with their bodies of earthly material.

The final salvation the author of Hebrews looks for is, moreover, not to be confused with righteous, perfected spirits dwelling in heaven. He envisions an inheritance that will be brought to God's people at the time when Christ, who is presently seated at God's right hand, will have all his enemies finally made subject (cf. Heb 10:12–13) and again appear in the κόσμος bringing salvation to those who await him (cf. Heb 1:14; 2:3, 5; 6:2; 9:28). That both the body and the inner conscience, which is probably closely connected with the spirit, are in need of purification is clear in Hebrews (e.g., 10:22). It would also be consistent with this picture to imagine those who have died attaining the perfection of their spirits, but continuing to await the full inheritance of the coming world. Those perfected righteous ones could then enjoy some portion of the heavenly

rest, but only together with all of God's people would they enter the fullness of the inheritance by way of the perfection of their mortal bodies/resurrection (cf. Heb 11:39–40; cf. *L.A.B.* 19:12–13; 23:13, where the eschatological resurrection is identified as the moment when all the righteous enter the eternal inheritance together).

This account further clarifies the significance of perfection language in Hebrews. Perfection has to do with the ability of the human being to draw near to God.<sup>153</sup> As such, perfection of both the corruptible body and the impure spirit is required to inherit the fullness of the coming world—the world characterized by purity, holiness, and immortal life. The close association of perfection, glorification, and sanctification already highlighted in section 3.5.1 above suggested this. The reason, then, that Jesus differs from the rest of his siblings, including the perfected spirits of the righteous, is that, as the ἀρχηγός, he actually has crossed over into full possession of the promised inheritance. He already has what the rest of his siblings are waiting for—the full perfection of the eschatological resurrection.

### ***3.7 Conclusions***

The present chapter has sought to demonstrate that the kind of eschatological cosmology and correlated elevation of humanity above the angels discussed in chapter

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<sup>153</sup> *Ascen. Isa.* 7:25 and 8:14–15 (cf. 9:7–9) may offer a helpful comparison here. Isaiah enters heaven spiritually, but as he ascends his spirit undergoes glorification. Nevertheless, he is not allowed to remain in heaven. Only after he dies does his glorified spirit get clothed in the glorious robe/body that is reserved for him in heaven. This is obviously a slightly different vision of the final state in that the individual righteous do not apparently wait for the rest of the righteous before obtaining their full glory. But the depiction of a glorified spirit and a glorious body in the text nicely illustrates the point that at least some eschatological thinkers (in this case, early Christians) were careful to clarify that the exaltation of the human being required the glorification of the spirit and some glorified body or counterpart.

two dovetails with some accounts of bodily ascension in Jewish apocalyptic literature.

Humans can be thought of as ascending into heaven with their human bodies.

Additionally, when humans ascend bodily and remain in heaven, they are made fit to do so by being glorified. This transformation makes them in some sense like the angels—they shine, have enduring life, and can dwell in God’s presence, but it also correlates with their being brought near to God’s throne and with a change in their relationship with the angels. The ontological distinction between humanity and the angels is not, that is, erased by human glorification.

This background provides a good, historically rooted context in which to read Heb 1–2. At issue is the restoration of humanity to the pinnacle of God’s creation. For the author of Hebrews Jesus represents the first human to have been made fit to enter fully into God’s presence and be elevated above the angels. Jesus has been glorified, but not in such a way as to have lost his humanity. He is in heaven not as a ministering πνεῦμα, but as a ministering ἄνθρωπος—the great high priest.<sup>154</sup> This implies that when he ascended into heaven, he did so with his human body, which implies further that the author thinks in terms of Jesus arising bodily from the dead.

Moreover, I have highlighted evidence in the text, often overlooked or misinterpreted, that strongly suggests the writer confessed Jesus’ resurrection. Not only does it make sense for him to have thought of Jesus as attaining the promised

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<sup>154</sup> It seems likely that the author imagines that everyone in heaven is a priest of God Most High, but not everyone is an angel, nor does everyone have the right to rule over that realm. The latter is reserved for the resurrected humans who dwell in God’s presence (cf. Rev 20:4–6).

eschatological or *better* resurrection, a belief for which some of the faithful of Heb 11 suffered, he speaks of Jesus being saved out of dead in language he elsewhere connects with resurrection (cf. Heb 5:7; 11:19). Additionally, he explicitly refers to Jesus arising to indestructible life.

This latter point indicates a transformation in Jesus' life. There was a time when he was subject to death. But, through his suffering he was crowned with glory; he was perfected (2:9–10). This language, I have argued, is likely to connote his being made fit, in his humanity, to enter the heavenly realms. Only as the one who, after death, has been made perfect is he qualified to serve as the everliving heavenly high priest.

That there was a moment in which Jesus was perfected, and that this moment matters for the high-priestly Christology of the author, follows from the way he emphasizes perfection as that attribute that qualifies Jesus to be granted high-priestly status. On earth Jesus' tribal lineage prevents him from serving as a priest. Only by being perfected—by being transformed such that he has an enduring life—can Jesus become a high priest. This enduring life was something Jesus obtained *after* he died. Resurrection, I have argued, is not only the best explanation for Jesus' transformation from being an ἄνθρωπος subject to death to his being one who has an enduring life, it is also the moment singled out by the author (7:11, 15).

All of this calls into question the consensus view that Jesus' resurrection is not important for Hebrews. Additionally, the idea that Hebrews conflates Jesus' ascension and resurrection by conceiving of the latter in spiritual terms, can no longer stand. There is no spiritualization of Jesus' resurrection. Rather, internal and external evidence suggest

that the author of Hebrews believed that Jesus died, rose again *with his human body*, ascended with that body into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Most High.

The recognition of the importance of Jesus' glorified or perfected humanity in heaven explains the logic that unites the two foci around which the author's Christology is centered—the elevation of Jesus above the angels to the divine throne in heaven and the high-priestly service he renders there in God's presence. These findings, though, have a further implication—they call into question the conclusion that Jesus' atoning work occurred on the cross. As several of the views surveyed in chapter one of this study have noted, the presence of Jesus' resurrection—especially as a *bodily* event—would seem to destroy the unity of Jesus' atoning sacrifice and his death on the cross. It is to this issue I turn next.

## **4. JESUS' RESURRECTION LIFE AND HEBREWS' CHRISTOLOGICAL AND SOTERIOLOGICAL APPROPRIATION OF YOM KIPPUR**

### ***4.1 Introduction***

The arguments of chapters two and three of this study have sought to establish that the confession of Jesus' bodily resurrection plays a crucial role for the high-priestly Christology presented in the book of Hebrews. In those chapters I argued that the correlated issues of Jesus' relationship to the angels, elevation to the status of high priest, and divine invitation to sit at God's right hand as the royal Son make sense on the assumption of Jesus' bodily ascension into heaven. Further, the way the author employs that assumption in his argument accords well with the background of some clearly attested streams of Second Temple speculation about human beings ascending into heaven. These findings bolster the conclusion that the author's argument depends upon the resurrection of Jesus' human body. I showed, in addition, that this confession coheres with several allusions and references to Jesus' resurrection actually present in the homily.

I turn now to address one of the central reasons that the presence and importance of Jesus' bodily resurrection in Hebrews has tended to be downplayed and even denied by modern interpreters. The survey presented in chapter one of this study indicated that it has become commonplace in the secondary literature to assume that the author maps Yom Kippur's two great moments—the slaughter of the victim and the presentation of its blood in the holy of holies—on to the two great christological foci of the Son's humiliation (epitomized by his death) and exaltation (epitomized by his enthronement in



heaven). As the great high priest, Jesus is both the sacrificial victim and the high-priestly officiant when he dies on the cross. Moreover, the crucifixion marks the location of Jesus' sacrifice and thus, the historical, temporal, and physical place of the presentation of that sacrifice before God. In Hebrews, the cross is Jesus' place of greatest humiliation, the center of his atoning offering, and the place from which he enters into heaven.

Put differently, modern interpreters tend to argue that the author's appeal to Yom Kippur enables him to explicate the theological meaning of the historical event of Jesus' crucifixion from both an earthly/historical and a heavenly/spiritual perspective. On the one hand, Yom Kippur allows the author to envision the cross in terms of the slaughter of the sacrificial victim. The cross is the place of Jesus' self-sacrifice (where the word *sacrifice* is assumed to denote "slaughter/death"). On the other hand, the imagery/metaphor of the high priest's entry into the holy of holies allows him to reflect on the heavenly/spiritual significance of that event—Jesus' death can be likened to the presentation of the blood before God on Yom Kippur as an atoning sacrifice. In Hebrews, Yom Kippur functions as a theological prism through which the manifold significance of the singular event of the crucifixion can be refracted and seen distinctly. By way of his creative appeal to Yom Kippur, the author can elucidate the theological/spiritual meaning of the crucifixion.

Given this general understanding of the centrality of the cross in Hebrews and the function of the author's appeal to Yom Kippur, it is unsurprising that scholars assume that references to Jesus' blood in Hebrews are self-evidently references to Jesus' death. Scot McKnight, for example, claims that when Hebrews explains the crucifixion, "[T]he

tilt is in the direction of the death of Jesus as a self-sacrifice, often spoken of as *blood*.”<sup>1</sup> Likewise, while explaining how blood language helps the author develop the significance of Jesus’ death, Luke Timothy Johnson states, “When Hebrews speaks of Christ entering the sanctuary with his own blood, it means that Christ’s entry into God’s presence was through the violent and bloody death on the cross.”<sup>2</sup> Many others could be cited,<sup>3</sup> but the point is clear. The language of “blood” is thought to function in Hebrews as a metaphor for Jesus’ obedient, sacrificial death on the cross.

One other element of this larger interpretation of Hebrews needs to be addressed with more specificity. The perceived correlation between the two-step movement of Yom Kippur (slaughter-presentation) and what is taken to be the essential substructure of the high-priestly Christology developed in Hebrews (death-exaltation) explains for most commentators the striking paucity of references to Jesus’ resurrection in Hebrews. Hans Windisch puts his finger squarely on the problem when he states that in Hebrews, “Tod und Himmelfahrt umschließen ... das Erlösungswerk, die *Auferstehung* ist bei der ganzen Symbolik ignoriert, weil sie die Einheitlichkeit der hohenpriesterlichen Aktion aufheben würde.”<sup>4</sup> Since the author views the cross as the place of sacrifice and speaks of Jesus’

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<sup>1</sup> Scot McKnight, *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005), 365 (emphasis added).

<sup>2</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 237, cf. 256.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 213; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 456; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 427; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* (WBC 47B; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 240; H. -F. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer: Übersetzt und Erklärt* (15th ed.; KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 467.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (HNT 14; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), 79 (emphasis original).

shed blood as a metaphor for that death, the closest possible connection between that event and the writer's language of Jesus' heavenly offering and high-priestly service must be maintained. The unity of Jesus' heavenly high-priestly work and earthly sacrifice requires downplaying or even rejecting the bodily resurrection. As Windisch contends, the resurrection would decouple Jesus' priestly self-sacrifice on the cross and his atoning act of offering his blood to God. The resurrection would drive a wedge between the cross and the offering that would render void the very soteriological interpretation of the cross the author apparently works so hard to establish. According to this interpretation of the writer's theological reflection on Yom Kippur's two-fold structure, he understandably leaves undeveloped (or underdeveloped) the claims of other early followers of Jesus regarding his bodily resurrection. The theological gain, however, is that the soteriological significance of Jesus' death can be grasped clearly.<sup>5</sup>

Thus one of the major elements of the larger thesis of this study—that belief in the resurrection of Jesus' human body is both *evident in Hebrews* and *matters for the Christology* developed by the author—contradicts one of the few points about which a

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<sup>5</sup> For different examples of how scholars work out the theological significance of Jesus' death and ascension relative to the resurrection or lack thereof see Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 86–87, 406; Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer (10,19–13,25)* (EKKNT 17/3; Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1997), 402–3; Otfried Hofius, *Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitl. Ruheort im Hebräerbrief* (WUNT 11; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1970), 181 n. 359 (cf. Joachim Jeremias, "Zwischen Karfreitag und Ostern: Descensus und Ascensus in der Karfreitagstheologie des Neuen Testaments," *ZNW* 42 [1949]: 194–201); Ernst Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk: Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief* (4th ed; FRLANT 55; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 147–48, 148 n. 1; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), xxxviii–xxxix; Arthur S. Peake, *Hebrews: Introduction, Authorized Version, Revised Version with Notes and Index* (New York: H. Frowde, 1902), 32, 242; Kenneth L. Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 15, 37–39.

large number of modern interpreters are certain: that the author's high-priestly Christology and appeal to Yom Kippur represent an extended metaphor intended to show how the death of Jesus can be understood as the ultimate atoning sacrifice.

This chapter reexamines the question of atonement in Hebrews in light of the findings of the previous two chapters. I first examine points in Hebrews where the author speaks plainly about *where* Jesus presented his sacrifice. The writer shows remarkable consistency on this point. When he specifies where Jesus offered his sacrifice, he *always* locates that offering in heaven. Next I examine his depictions of Jesus' offering. The writer uses three terms: body, blood, and self. Jesus' death has typically been understood as the unifying concept behind these three descriptors. In light of the previous findings of this study, I argue that the *Tendenz* among modern interpreters to spiritualize and/or to moralize these terms by appealing to Jesus' death as the event/concept that holds them together misconstrues the author's account. He can speak about Jesus' heavenly offering as body, blood, and self *not* because he is spiritualizing Jesus' death, but because he conceives of Jesus rising bodily from the dead and ascending bodily into God's heavenly presence where Jesus can present himself alive before God.

Thus the language of body, blood, and self does not function as part of an extended metaphor intended to portray Jesus' obedient death on the cross as an atoning sacrifice offered by a great high priest. Rather, in keeping with the emphasis in Leviticus on the offering of blood as the presentation of *life* to God, the unifying point behind each of these terms is the indestructible life Jesus came to possess *after* the crucifixion. Life is what Jesus brings into God's presence and offers as a sacrifice, not death.

To help establish this point I look in detail at the ways blood sacrifice, and that of Yom Kippur in particular, function in the Levitical system. The emphasis in such sacrifices is not the act of slaughtering the victim, but the application of its blood to certain appurtenances in the tabernacle/temple, and the presentation of its blood before God's presence in the holy of holies. Significantly, this blood did not represent or bear the victim's death; rather, the blood is identified as the life of the victim. In Levitical terms, to offer blood to God is not an act of offering death to God or of bringing death into God's presence—a notion that would be abhorrent. In fact, one of the goals of the purification effected by offering blood to God was to push back or fight against death. The purification element of blood sacrifice implies that mortality cannot approach God, nor can God dwell in the presence of corruption unless the mortal first becomes ritually pure.

Insofar as blood language works symbolically in a sacrificial context, it represents life, not death. Importantly too, blood/life appears to be the agent that, more than any other element in the process of animal sacrifice, effects atonement. Such conclusions do not preclude either the author's symbolic appeals to sacrificial practice or moral applications regarding Jesus' faithful obedience. Indeed, I argue that these findings cohere better with such appeals and applications than does an emphasis on the cross as the place of Jesus' atoning sacrifice.

All of this suggests that two widely accepted conclusions—1) the equation of “blood” language with Jesus' death in Hebrews; and, 2) the notion that the slaughter of the sacrificial victim formed one of two great moments on Yom Kippur—more likely

represent the theological biases of modern interpreters, and perhaps an especially Pauline emphasis on the cross, than they do the author's christological and soteriological reflections. In keeping with the primary Levitical understanding of blood sacrifice, the writer of Hebrews, I argue, thinks in terms of Jesus' presenting his blood—his life—before God *in heaven*. Jesus' immortal, resurrection life is the sacrifice—that is, the object that Jesus offers to God—that he offered to effect atonement.

What then of Jesus' death in Hebrews? In the last section of this chapter I survey the passages where Jesus' death, and in particular references to the cross and the crucifixion, occur. I demonstrate that with two exceptions (Heb 9:15; 13:12), Jesus' death is not directly correlated with sacrificial language. The most common pattern in Hebrews is to speak of Jesus' death in terms of the suffering he endured to obtain the rewards God has promised his people. This does not prevent the crucifixion from having an important role to play in the process that results in Jesus' atoning offering being made. In Hebrews Jesus' death is both the chief example of how God's people should faithfully endure suffering, *and* the event that triggers the process that results in his being qualified and equipped to offer his indestructible life to God. I begin, then, with a discussion of where the author of Hebrews says Jesus offered his sacrifice.

#### ***4.2 Heaven as the Location of Jesus' Atoning Offering in Hebrews***

In chapter three of this study I noted that the author's comment in Heb 8:4 that the Law forbids Jesus from serving as a priest on earth implies that Jesus was not a priest, let alone a high priest, during his sojourn on earth. The author emphasizes Jesus' ascension and heavenly session in part because he acknowledges the authority of the Law, at least

on earth. Jesus can serve as high priest only if he is in heaven. This finding aligns with the writer's repeated claims that Jesus is a priest in heaven (e.g., 4:14; 7:26; 8:1–2). The logic of 8:4 also accords with the author's statements that Jesus performed his high-priestly act of presenting his offering to God *in heaven*. Given the nearly universal conclusion that Jesus offered himself to God when he died on the cross, the specific claims of the author that Jesus presented his atoning sacrifice to God in heaven require some discussion.

In 8:1–2 the writer states that Jesus is the high priest who sits at God's right hand and who serves as a "minister" (λεειτουργός) in the true tabernacle, the one built by the Lord, not by human beings. The author goes on in 8:5–6 to contrast further the heavenly locale where Jesus ministers with that of the earthly priests. The latter serve (λατρεύουσιν) *in a copy* (ὑποδείγματι) and shadow (σκιᾷ)<sup>6</sup> of the heavenly things (τῶν ἐπουρανίων). The definitive element of this service consists in the presentation of offerings and gifts to God. The earthly priests are appointed for that very reason (8:3–4; cf. 5:1 and 3 where the purpose of these offerings is to deal with sins [ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν, 5:1; περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν, 5:3]). The earthly sanctuary, in other words, is the location where the Levitical priests present their offerings to God in order to deal with sin. Jesus, by way of contrast, presents his offering to God in the structure located in heaven—the true tabernacle upon which the earthly one is patterned.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The context and common use of the dative with λατρεύω indicate that the datives here have a locative sense (so, e.g., Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 406).

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Klawans has recently pointed out that there are at least two distinct models for relating the Jerusalem temple and heaven: the Jerusalem temple can be viewed as representing the cosmos (i.e., heaven

The author makes the point even more clearly in 9:11–12. I render these verses as follows: “But when Christ, the high priest of the good things<sup>8</sup> now available,<sup>9</sup> went

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and earth), and the Jerusalem temple can be understood as the earthly model of an actual temple located in heaven (*Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 111–44). He notes that while these two notions are not necessarily incompatible, scholars often conflate them in spite of the fact that Second Temple and early Common Era texts typically attest one conception or the other, not both. Klawans also makes the insightful observations that 1) belief in a heavenly temple correlates with the assumption that the fullness of God’s presence dwells in that heavenly space, and 2) angels are the priests in that temple. On this last point he notes, “In all cases, where we find a belief of a temple in heaven, we will also find a developed angelology. On the other hand, in the absence of a developed angelology, we are more likely to find evidence for the notion of the temple *as* cosmos, as opposed to the temple *in* the cosmos [i.e., in heaven]. . . . A well-developed angelology . . . is an absolute prerequisite for the notion of a heavenly temple” (112, emphasis original). In light of this pattern, the well-developed angelology presupposed in Hebrews—viz. the depiction of angels as ministering spirits/priests in heaven—is significant. It is not likely to be an accident that the author speaks in Heb 9–10 about Jesus entering the tabernacle in heaven, the very tabernacle that Moses saw, and moving through its sancta into the place where God dwells. This concrete depiction of a heavenly structure where God dwells and where the angels serve as priests (Heb 1) indicates the author’s belief in a heavenly tabernacle upon which the earthly tabernacle/temple is modeled. Hebrews does not, as many argue (e.g., Kenneth L. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* [SNTSMS 143; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 151–54) understand the temple to be a representation of the cosmos. Other scholars have argued that Hebrews envisions a tabernacle in heaven see, e.g., Otfried Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräer 6,19 f. und 10,19 f.* (WUNT 14; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1972), esp. 18–19; 55–58.

<sup>8</sup> Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 450) observes that the phrase τὰ ἀγαθὰ is at points used in the LXX with reference to the promised land: Exod 3:8, 10:12; Num 14:7; Deut 1:25, 8:1.

<sup>9</sup> This translation is driven by the broader context of Hebrews. Jesus’ entry into heaven is also, as I argued in chapter two of this study, his entry into the οἰκουμένη to come. Jesus has gone as the ἀρχηγός ahead of the rest of God’s people into the fullness of the inheritance promised to them. “The good things that have come into being” because of Jesus the high priest are for the audience likely to be understood as the fullness of God’s promised inheritance. In some ways the audience already has access to this realm (e.g., 4:15–16). In other ways, however, they continue, like the faithful ones of old (see esp. 11:39–40), to look forward to the fullness of their salvation (cf. 9:28). Notably, the well-attested textual variant here (μέλλοντων [Σ A D<sup>2</sup> I<sup>vid</sup> 0278. 33. 1881 ℞ lat sy<sup>hmg</sup> co; Eus] instead of the more difficult reading γενομένων) may suggest that early readers of Hebrews interpreted the argument of the text at this point along the lines I have just suggested. That is, it seems more likely that some early Christians “corrected” the text to read μέλλοντων, thereby bringing it in line with the understanding that the “good things” are nothing less than the coming inheritance to which the author has already made explicit reference in 2:5 and 6:5, than that they replaced the word the writer has already used to qualify the inheritance (i.e., μέλλω in 2:5 and 6:5) with a form of γίνομαι, thereby allowing the inference that the inheritance has already come to them. The μέλλω reading, however, cuts against the more subtle argument of the writer that the “good things,” while in some sense already available, have not yet been fully possessed. The point of the parenthesis is both to encourage the audience by showing that, because of Jesus, they have begun to



through (παραγενόμενος ... διὰ)<sup>10</sup> the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands—that is, not belonging to this creation—he entered once for all time into (ἐφάπαξ εἰς) the holy places,<sup>11</sup> not by means (διὰ)<sup>12</sup> of the blood of goats and bulls, but by means (διὰ) of his own blood, resulting in his obtaining (εὐράμενος)<sup>13</sup> eternal redemption (αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν).”

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participate in the here and now in their inheritance, and to push them to continue moving toward that inheritance so they do not, like Israel at Kadesh Barnea, lose that which has been promised to them.

<sup>10</sup> The collocation παραγενόμενος ... διὰ ... εἰσῆλθεν encourages a spatial conception of Jesus’ action. The language presents his entry into the sancta of the heavenly tabernacle in terms that suggest the annual movement of the high priest through the tabernacle and his ultimate arrival in God’s presence in the holy of holies. This reading fits well with the depiction of the layout of the earthly tabernacle into different sections (9:1–5) and the reference to the high priest’s moving through these spaces once a year on Yom Kippur (9:6–7). Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 449) and Lane (*Hebrews 9–13*, 229–30 n. c) both highlight the emphasis on movement through the tabernacle in the context.

<sup>11</sup> The phrase τὰ ἅγια is not likely to be shorthand for τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων/the holy of holies (cf. LXX 3 Kgdms 8:6; 2 Chr 4:22, 5:7; though see MS P which reads τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων). Here the phrase probably denotes the two sancta of the tabernacle. The constituent parts of the tabernacle where the holy place (the first tent; cf. 9:2) and the holy of holies (the second tent; cf. 9:3). The veil formed the divider between these two holy places. Thus when the author describes Jesus entering the holy places (τὰ ἅγια) he likely means to indicate that the tabernacle in heaven also has two sections (cf. 8:5). Entering the tabernacle on Yom Kippur involved moving through the first tent (the holy place), passing through the veil, and entering into the inner section (the holy of holies). Since the earthly tabernacle is set up in accordance with the heavenly structure, Jesus entered the holy places (the first and second tents) when he presented his offering in heaven. Ellingworth rightly comments on the phrase τὰ ἅγια that, “The context suggests an identification with the heavenly tabernacle as a whole” (*Hebrews*, 452).

<sup>12</sup> The three uses of διὰ in these verses are not likely to be identical. The last two instances in v. 12 are clearly instrumental. The blood carried by the high priest, as also by Jesus, qualifies him to enter the inner sanctum. In keeping with the context the use of the preposition in v. 11 is likely to be spatial (see n. 10). Hofius (*Der Vorhang*, 67 n. 110, 81 n. 188) long ago pointed out other instances of the same preposition used multiple times in close proximity with different nuances of meaning (e.g., ἐν in Rom 2:28–29; cf. my discussion of 10:19–20 in section 4.3.4).

<sup>13</sup> The hypotactic structure of these verses is significant. The first adverbial participle is an aorist form and precedes the main finite verb. The main finite verb is also an aorist form. The final adverbial participle is a perfect form that follows the head verb. While an adverbial participle that precedes the verb it modifies often implies antecedent action relative to the verb (especially when the participle is in the aorist; cf. Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* [Studies in Biblical Greek 1; New York: Peter Lang, 1989], 379–85), this meaning seems unlikely here. The usual sense of antecedent action (“After Christ went through the tabernacle, ... he entered into the holiest place”) would work well, had the author referred to Jesus entering into the holy of holies. Since he has instead

The logic of these verses seems fairly straightforward. Jesus entered the true tabernacle located in heaven. This tabernacle is neither the created heavens nor part of the created heavens, but a structure that exists above and beyond the realm of this creation.<sup>14</sup> Jesus went *through* this heavenly structure and *entered into* its most holy place. The layout of the heavenly tabernacle, in other words, is similar to that of the earthly one. This is precisely what one would expect given that the earthly tabernacle is modeled on the heavenly one, the very one that was shown to Moses (8:5).

Jesus was able to enter the heavenly holy of holies by means of his own blood, not by means of the legitimate offerings carried by the earthly high priests—the blood of goats and bulls (οὐδὲ δι’ αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος). In view of the extended comparison and contrast set up in this text between Jesus and the

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referred to Christ entering into the holy places (see n. 11), the formal agreement between the first adverbial participle and the main verb suggests a coincidental sense for the first participle. Thus, “When Christ went through the tabernacle, . . . he entered into the holy places,” or “Christ went through the tabernacle . . . and entered into the holy places.” The change to the perfect form for the participle that follows the main verb is interesting. The stative aspect of the perfect participle depicts Christ as in the state of the participle’s verbal action—i.e., obtaining (see 251–59 for Porter’s discussion of the stative aspect and the perfect form). What Christ obtains is expressed by the participle’s object—viz. eternal redemption. Porter suggests a definite tendency toward concurrent or subsequent action relative to the head verb when the adverbial participle follows the verb (379–85). A concurrent notion is hard to square with the motion represented in the context. Subsequent action, however, fits the context well. Jesus went into the holy places and *then* obtained redemption. I think, however, that the resultative connotation that I have made explicit in my translation captures the meaning more accurately (and it should be noted that this kind of logical progression is not exclusive of temporal progression). Not only is this a possible meaning for an adverbial participle that follows its main verb (see esp. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996], 637–39), but this sense also coheres with the logic inherent in the Yom Kippur ritual—namely, the conception of the high priest moving through the parts of the tabernacle into the holy of holies in order to present the sacrificial blood before God and effect the desired result—atonement (cf. RSV and NRSV—“thus securing”/“thus obtaining,” respectively).

<sup>14</sup> See n. 7.

earthly high priests, blood can be identified as the agent (δι' αἵματος) that enables both the earthly high priests and Jesus to pass through the first sanctum (διὰ τῆς ... σκηνης, v. 11) and enter into the inner sanctum (εἰσῆλθεν ... εἰς τὰ ἅγια). In the case of Jesus, the blood is his own. The point seems to be that because he bears the blood that will be offered he can move through the first part of the tabernacle in heaven, and presumably through the veil that divides that initial sanctum from the holy of holies.<sup>15</sup> Once in the heavenly holy of holies, he obtained eternal redemption by ministering in accordance with his high-priestly office—namely, by presenting his blood offering before the presence of God.

Both *what* Jesus did in heaven (i.e., present his blood) and *where* in heaven he did it (i.e., in the holy of holies of the heavenly tabernacle) correlate well with the idea that the earthly tabernacle and the earthly offerings are patterned on the realities that exist in heaven. Just as the earthly structure has a holy place, a dividing veil, and a most holy place (9:1–5); and just as the high priest enters that most holy place one time every year with a blood sacrifice to effect atonement, albeit of a limited kind (Heb 9:6–10), so also Jesus passed through the first section of the heavenly structure, through the dividing curtain (cf. 6:19; 10:20),<sup>16</sup> and into its most holy place.<sup>17</sup> There he offered his own blood

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<sup>15</sup> While divisions in heaven may be difficult for modern thinkers to grasp, this is precisely how Jewish apocalyptic ascension literature depicts heaven (e.g., *2 En.* 3–22; *T. Levi* 3:1–10; cf. 2 Cor 12:2). There are even barriers in heaven that prevent one from getting closer to God. In particular the heavenly throne room/holy of holies in heaven stands behind a barrier that only some angels can go through (e.g., *3 Bar.* 11:1–14:2, where Micheal can move between the upper and lower heavens to receive and offer the prayers of the righteous to God; cf. *2 En.* 20:1–21:6).

<sup>16</sup> I address Heb 10:19–20 in section 4.3.4.

as a sacrifice and effected a better atonement than those blood sacrifices offered repeatedly on earth. In keeping with the nature of the heavenly realms, Jesus' blood offering is also permanent and fully effective.

This understanding of Jesus serving in the heavenly structure that the earthly tabernacle models also aligns with the temporal distinctions the author draws between the earthly tabernacle and practices and those of the heavenly ones. The Holy Spirit provided a *παράβολή* of the way full atonement would ultimately be made in the heavenly sanctuary at the appropriate time (cf. 9:9) by having Moses build the earthly tabernacle according to the pattern of the heavenly one (9:6–10; cf. 8:5).<sup>18</sup>

As one might expect with an account of a human ascending into heaven, the writer's language in 9:11–12 encourages a spatial and temporal conception of Jesus entering and moving through a structure that actually exists in heaven in order to present his offering to God. This heavenly structure is the very one that Moses saw when he ascended from Sinai into heaven to receive the Law.<sup>19</sup> It became the place of ultimate atonement when, after his death, Jesus entered it and presented his offering to God. All of this coincides with the author's claim that Jesus serves as a high priest in heaven.

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<sup>17</sup> The depiction assumes that he would also have passed through the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies (cf. Heb 6:19; 10:20).

<sup>18</sup> This suggests an important hermeneutical correlate—because the heavenly structure is ontologically prior, the earthly tabernacle and sacrifices are instructive for understanding what happens in heaven. Thus for the author of Hebrews one can learn something about Jesus' ministry in heaven, where he went, what he did, and what he accomplished by looking at what happens in the earthly counterparts of the heavenly realities. The earthly structures and practices therefore inform the writer's Christology and are not mere ciphers to be filled with predetermined christological content.

<sup>19</sup> On the importance of Moses' ascension for Hebrews see section 3.2.1.

In 9:23–25 the writer again stresses the idea that Jesus performed his high priestly duties once for all in the tabernacle in heaven. Here, in keeping with the notion that the earthly tabernacle is patterned on the heavenly one, he states in 9:23 that just as the copies of the things in heaven—i.e., the structure and implements of the earthly tabernacle—needed to be purified by the blood applications mentioned in 9:19–22 (literally “by these things,” τούτοις), so also “the heavenly things” (τὰ ἑπουράνια) had to be purified by better sacrifices (θυσίαις).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The idea that the heavenly tabernacle might require purification may not be as unthinkable as is often thought (contra Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 8). First, it should be noted that the Mosaic covenant and earthly tabernacle required sacrifices, anointing, and washings for purification as part of its inauguration (Exod 24:6–8; 40:9–15, 26–34). Similarly, the ordination of priests and the consecration of their vestments were purified (Exod 29:19–21; Lev 8:1–9:24, esp. 8:10–30). All of this suggests that purification is an element of inauguration for service, a notion clearly present in the immediate context of Heb 9:23 (cf. 9:18–22). The idea of purifying the heavenly tabernacle is likely to be primarily about inaugurating it—properly preparing it—so that Jesus the high priest can go into it and present his atoning offering. Second, however, the Enochic literature demonstrates that within apocalypticism it could in some cases be legitimate to think of the categories of pure and impure as applying to heavenly things. In the Book of the Watchers, for example, the angelic watchers are heavenly, spirit beings who nonetheless defile themselves by intercourse with human women (and thus probably contact with vaginal blood; cf. *1 En.* 7:1; 9:8; 10:11; 12:4; esp. 15:3–4). Because they are now morally (and perhaps also ritually) impure, they are banned from returning to the sanctuary in heaven (12:4; 14:5; 15:3), probably because they would defile the heavenly sanctuary (so Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 22), or because they already have defiled it. Thus Klawans observes, “While it would appear logical to assume that an earthly temple would be more prone to pollution than a heavenly one, that logical *assumption* is undercut, not supported, by *1 Enoch*. According to this text, the heavenly temple, no different from the earthly one, is prone to pollution by a fornicating priesthood” (*Purity, Sacrifice and the Temple*, 131; emphasis original). By the same token, the notion that heavenly things could ever become defiled seems hard to square with a cosmology heavily influenced by a form of Platonism. Thus Ceslas Spicq, who argued for the importance of Platonism in Hebrews, declared, “L’idée d’impureté antérieure est un non-sens pour le sanctuaire céleste” (*L’Épître aux Hébreux: II.—Commentaire* [EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1953], 267; similarly Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 132, finds the notion “fantastic”; cf. the careful discussion of the issue in A. J. M. Wedderburn, “Sawing Off the Branches: Theologizing Dangerously *Ad Hebraeos*,” *JTS* 56 [2005]: 393–414, here 400). Spicq opts instead for the idea of inauguration (Spicq, *L’Épître*, 2:267). Attridge argues that the notion of the heavenly temple here is invoked as a metaphor in order to point to the existential/interior cleansing of the conscience of the individuals in the believing community (*Hebrews*, 262). Some commentators do argue for the pollution of the heavenly sanctuary by human sin (see, e.g., Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 246–47).

That “these things” and “sacrifices” in 9:23 refer to blood offerings is clear from the context. I discuss the logic of the argument of 9:15–22 in more detail below.<sup>21</sup> For now I note that just as in 9:11–12, here Jesus is depicted as having gone *into* the heavenly structure upon which the earthly tabernacle was patterned. Verse 24 is relatively clear on this point: “For Christ did not enter into (εἰς ... εἰσηλθεν) the holy places made by hands—that is, the corresponding depictions (ἀντίτυπα) of the true ones, but into heaven itself, now to appear (ἐμφανισθῆναι)<sup>22</sup> in the presence of God (τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ) on our behalf.” Jesus is doing in heaven what the high priests do annually on earth.

Yet, as with 9:11–12, the comparison of the earthly ministry of the high priest and the earthly tabernacle also implies a contrast. The earthly high priest enters into the holy places made by hands—into the earthly depictions that correspond to the heavenly realities upon which they are patterned. Jesus entered into heaven itself—the place where the holy tabernacle not made by human hands exists (cf. 8:2; 9:11). The earthly high priest in some sense enters into God’s presence in the holy of holies, but Jesus entered in the fullest sense into God’s presence in the heavenly holy of holies (9:24). This comparison and contrast continues in 9:25. Here the author clarifies that while the earthly high priest must enter the earthly holy of holies every year with an offering of blood that

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<sup>21</sup> See section 4.4.4.

<sup>22</sup> The verb ἐμφανίζω in the passive voice means “to become visible, be manifested” to someone (LSJ s.v. “ἐμφανίζω”). It is used of things becoming visible (Wis 17:4; Matt 27:53), though this optical sense does not always seem to be the force of the form (e.g., Wis 1:2, where God makes himself manifest to those who seek him). The idea that Jesus has appeared in God’s presence, in the sense of becoming visible, fits well in this context.

is not his own (ἐν αἵματι ἄλλοτρίῳ), Jesus does not need to enter into the heavenly holy of holies annually in order to offer himself again and again (οὐδ' ἵνα πολλάκις προσφέρῃ εἰαυτόν; cf. 9:12).

Given the preceding discussion, the author's repeated statements that Jesus presented his offering and *then* sat down at the right hand of the Most High (1:3; 7:26–8:2; 10:12) take on new significance. These statements are often seen as referring to Jesus' death/offering and ascension/exaltation.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, Jesus' death precedes his exaltation at the right hand (cf. 12:2).<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the pattern of enduring suffering *before* entering the inheritance runs right through the homily.<sup>25</sup> One should note, however, that the idea of Jesus entering into God's heavenly presence and offering his sacrifice there (cf. 9:24–26) fits the pattern of Jesus sitting at God's right hand *after* making his atoning offering.

Put differently, the image of Jesus making his offering and then sitting down may be fairly straightforward. Jesus, having already risen and ascended into heaven, is right there in God's presence, in front of God's throne in the heavenly holy of holies.<sup>26</sup> There in heaven he presents his offering before God. Then, having effected atonement for sin by means of his offering, he is invited by God to sit at the right hand. This he does. The image is the same as the one in Heb 1:3—after making purification for sins, he sat down. He remains on that throne, *in* heaven, awaiting the subjugation of his enemies (10:13; cf.

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<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 45–46, 215–17, 279–80; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 101–2.

<sup>24</sup> I discuss this point in more detail in section 4.4.2.

<sup>25</sup> See my discussions in sections 3.5 and 4.4.2.

<sup>26</sup> The idea that the heavenly holy of holies is the place of God's throne is common (see section 2.4.1.3 n. 73 for some examples).

2:5–9). From heaven he will appear a second time to bring those waiting for him into their full salvation (9:28).

In sum, at several points the author depicts Jesus entering the tabernacle, coming directly into/appearing before God's presence, and presenting his atoning offering to God *in heaven*. At other points the language of the text allows the inference that Jesus made his offering in heaven before God's presence and *then* sat down on the throne at God's right hand.

The notion that the author of Hebrews places significant emphasis on Jesus' high-priestly ministry occurring in heaven is not one of the original contributions of this study. Modern interpreters often puzzle over the meaning of this datum.<sup>27</sup> I suggest that this aspect of the homily's argument ought to be understood in light of the author's conviction that *after* the crucifixion, *Jesus' human body rose from the dead*. When Jesus then ascended into heaven, he ascended with that body. As I argued in chapter two of this study, Heb 1–2 envisions Jesus taking his perfected blood and flesh into heaven and, as a glorified human being, being elevated to the throne above the angels. If Jesus' bodily resurrection is one of the central assumptions that makes sense of the writer's claim that Jesus is both the royal Son who has been elevated above the angels *and* the great high priest who always lives to intercede for his brothers and sisters, then the language of Jesus moving through the heavenly tabernacle, entering into God's presence in order to

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<sup>27</sup> See the survey of interpreters in chapter one of this study and in particular their positions on the relationship between Jesus' death and exaltation for the soteriology of Hebrews.



present his offering to God in the heavenly holy of holies, and sitting on the throne in heaven takes on an entirely different cast.

Attempts to conflate the high-priestly activity of Jesus with his death on the cross may, therefore, unduly spiritualize the straightforward language of the author. When he claims that Jesus was not a priest—let alone a high priest—on earth (8:4), and goes on to stress that Jesus made his atoning offering before God in the heavenly tabernacle, his belief in Jesus' bodily resurrection suggests that he means exactly what he says. Jesus was only qualified to become high priest *after* his resurrection. Only after this event was he further able to enter into God's presence in heaven to offer his atoning sacrifice there.

The author's claim that Jesus presented his offering before the Father in the heavenly tabernacle is anything but an incoherent and inconsistent metaphorical appeal to Jewish sacrifice and high-priestly service intended to explain the spiritual significance of the historical event of the crucifixion.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, for the writer of Hebrews Jesus really has become a high priest who made his offering before God in the only place where, and at the only time after which, he was qualified to do so—in the heavenly holy of holies *after* his resurrection.

The recognition of the place and import of Jesus' bodily resurrection for the author provides an explanation for another phenomenon of the text—the multiple terms used to describe what Jesus offered to God. Before considering how the sacrificial system informs his argument that Jesus' blood sacrifice in heaven effected atonement, I turn to

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<sup>28</sup> Contra, e.g., Wedderburn, "Sawing Off the Branches," esp. 412–14.

discuss the various ways in which the writer describes what Jesus had to offer (8:3, cf. 5:1).

### **4.3 The Sacrifice Jesus Offered: Body, Blood, and Self**

Throughout the latter half of the homily the author employs three different terms to denote the object that Jesus offered to God as a sacrifice. These are “himself” (7:27; 9:14, 25), his “blood” (9:12, 14; 13:12), and his “body” (10:10). Commentators frequently assume that Jesus’ death forms the conceptual center around which this language orbits.<sup>29</sup> Jesus sacrificed himself in obedience to God on the cross—the place where he offered himself, where his blood was shed, and where his body was offered.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> E.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 214, 248 (here Attridge entertains the idea that blood is a metaphor for Jesus’ life, though Jesus’ crucifixion marks the offering of this life), 276–77; Koester, *Hebrews*, 368, 410, 440; Wilfrid Stott, “The Conception of ‘Offering’ in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *NTS* 9 (1962): 62–67.

<sup>30</sup> I noted in section 1.2.3.3 n. 103 the author’s predilection for the verb προσφέρω. Not one time in Hebrews does the author use the verb θυσιάζω orθύω. The term *sacrifice* in Hebrews is always a noun—θυσία, a thing offered. In the LXX a sacrifice/θυσία did not always involve a slaughter (cf., e.g., LXX Lev 2:8, 14; 7:9, where grain and firstfruits are offered/προσφέρω as sacrifices/θυσία). Granting the significant limitations of a comparison between Rahlfs and the MT, I nonetheless point out that προσφέρω almost never occurs where תָּרַם stands in the MT (though see Deut 17:1, where the Göttingen apparatus notes that forms of προσφέρω are found in MSS A F oI’ C’ f 30’-85<sup>txt</sup>-130-321<sup>txt</sup>-343 y z 59 319 646 M<sup>txt</sup>; otherwise forms ofθύω or θυσιάζω are attested). In Rahlfs προσφέρω is often found at points where the MT attests a form of תָּרַם (particularly in Leviticus and Numbers). Clearly the word can denote an act that is part of the process of sacrifice, but significantly it does not denote the act that the English verb *sacrifice* tends to signify—the act of slaughter. At points προσφέρω is distinguished from the act of slaughter (e.g., Lev 1:5; 9:12, 15, 18; 17:4). This distinction is likely in line with the fact that the altars in Leviticus are places on which sacrifices are offered, but they are not places on which offerings from the flock or the herd are slaughtered. Often προσφέρω is used to speak of offering blood (e.g., Lev 1:5; 7:33; 9:9, 12, 18; Ezek 44:7, 15). Again, however, this is not the moment of slaughter, but rather the act of applying blood to the altars or sprinkling blood within the holy of holies (cf. Ezek 44:27, where the Yom Kippur blood is offered/προσφέρω in the holy of holies in the renewed temple). This is not to suggest that “to offer” an animal would be completely abstracted from its slaughter (in Hebrews Abraham’s offering of Isaac clearly implies Isaac’s death; Heb 11:17), but the evidence suggests that the word is not an obvious synonym for slaughter.

According to some interpreters, Heb 10:5–10 stands as one of the primary places where the author’s metaphorical appeal to the Jewish sacrificial system overreaches.<sup>31</sup> Here, the writer’s fundamental conviction that the cross really is the central atoning moment becomes clear. In 10:10 he describes the “offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” as the event that does what none of the Law’s sacrifices and offerings could do (see 10:5–6, 8)—fulfill the divine will and make holy both the author and his audience (ἡγιασμένοι ἑσμέν; 10:10).

The conclusion that 10:10 points to the cross as the place where Jesus’ body was offered (10:10) is treated as self-evident in the secondary literature. The assumed centrality of the crucifixion for the author’s Christology and soteriology, coupled with the reference to the Christ “coming into the world” (εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον) in 10:5, make it obvious to most commentators that the writer’s emphasis on the Son’s incarnation further implies that “the world” (ὁ κόσμος) is also the realm in which his body was offered.<sup>32</sup> But the author does not explicitly refer to the cross or to Jesus’ death anywhere in 10:5–10, which leaves open another possibility. Perhaps, in keeping with his claims that Jesus is the exalted human being who serves as the heavenly high priest, he envisions Jesus’ body being offered to God in heaven. I turn now to discuss this possibility.

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<sup>31</sup> See the helpful discussion of this approach in Wedderburn, “Sawing Off the Branches,” 405–9.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 273, 276–77; Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 266; Koester, *Hebrews*, 440.

#### 4.3.1 *Hebrews 10:5–10: Heaven and the Offering of Jesus’ Body*

Given the author’s consistent use of κόσμος<sup>33</sup> and the related adjective κοσμικός<sup>34</sup> to denote the realm of creation, and his use of οἰκουμένη in 1:6 and 2:5 to refer to the eternal realm,<sup>35</sup> there can be little doubt that Heb 10:5 points to the entrance of the Christ (ὁ Χριστός, 9:28) into the created order. The participial clause “εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον” in 10:5 implies that the Son came into the created order.<sup>36</sup> Hebrews 10:5 must therefore refer to the incarnation of the heavenly Son.<sup>37</sup> Here the author implicitly stresses the Son’s becoming a blood-and-flesh human being in every respect (cf. 2:14–17). By putting the words of Ps 39:7–9a LXX in the mouth of the Son as he is “coming into the world,” the writer plainly indicates that the Son committed himself to doing God’s will during his sojourn in the created order. This thought parallels another incarnation motif plainly affirmed earlier in the homily—the Son participated fully in the human condition, yet was without sin (4:15; 5:7–8).

These observations, however, do not necessitate the conclusion that the offering of Jesus’ body must also be understood as occurring within the κόσμος. The argument of this study already suggests that the climatic moment of the Son’s incarnation was not the

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<sup>33</sup> See Heb 4:3; 9:26; 11:7, 38.

<sup>34</sup> See Heb 9:1.

<sup>35</sup> See section 2.3.

<sup>36</sup> The author uses heaven language in two different ways: 1) to refer to a part of the created order, thus a part of the κόσμος (e.g., 1:10; 4:14; 11:12; 12:26); and 2) to refer to the realm of God’s dwelling, a realm that stands above and apart from the κόσμος (e.g., 7:26; 8:1; 9:23–24; 12:23, 25).

<sup>37</sup> This is widely recognized (so, for instance, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 273, though he thinks the author’s point is more about the world as the location of Jesus’ offering than the incarnation per se).

moment of his death, nor did he cease being incarnate on the cross.<sup>38</sup> Given the logic of the argument in Heb 1–2 for the elevation of the Son *qua* human being above all other created beings (especially the angelic spirits), there are good reasons to think that the author located some of the most significant moments of the Son’s incarnation in heaven, after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension.

This is not to say that the earthly life and death of Jesus are unimportant in Hebrews, or that they are not assumed within the logic of 10:5–10. Rather, it is to note that the questions of *where* the author locates the significance of these events, and *how* he presents them as functioning with respect to the location of Jesus’ atoning offering should not be begged. A discussion of the larger context surrounding 10:5–10 suggests that, in keeping with the presumption that Jesus’ humanity in heaven is the element central to his exaltation above the angels, and the emphasis on Jesus’ high-priestly ministry being performed in heaven, the author conceives of the offering of Jesus’ body as the presentation of Jesus’ resurrected humanity—his glorified body—before God in heaven. In the following section I argue that Jesus’ qualifications to be the mediator of the new covenant, the author’s citation of Ps 40 and allusion to Isa 26:20, and his citation of Hab 2:3b–4 lend support to the conclusion that, as with Jesus’ blood, he envisions Jesus’ body being offered to God in heaven.

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<sup>38</sup> See esp. those interpreters noted in sections 1.2.2 and 1.2.3.

#### 4.3.1.1 *The New Covenant and Its Better Mediator*

As noted above, the identification of Jesus' high-priestly offering—the object Jesus presented as a sacrifice—forms one of the programmatic topics addressed by the author in Heb 8–10. Jesus must, like the Law-ordained priests on earth, have something to offer to God (cf. 8:3). Because the location and offerings of the earthly ministers are already established, Jesus' offering must be of a different kind, and must be presented in a different place. The fact that the Levitical priests already take care of the earthly offerings in the earthly sanctuary in accordance with the Law (cf. 8:4) functions as the rationale for these conclusions. The author also anticipates that if Jesus serves in a different place and presents a different kind of offering, then a different covenant must be presupposed.<sup>39</sup> Thus, before identifying the offering Jesus presents, he affirms that Jesus has become the mediator (μεσίτης) of a “better” covenant—a “new” covenant, founded upon promises better than those of the Mosaic covenant (8:6).<sup>40</sup>

The better promises pertaining to this better covenant appear to be the following:

1) the very promise itself that God will one day institute a “new covenant” (δι' αθήκη

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<sup>39</sup> This logic coheres with the statement in Heb 7:11–12 regarding the relationship between the priesthood and the Law. If the priesthood is transformed, so too the Law must be transformed. Thus, given that the author argues that a different priest has arisen and become the high priest in heaven, it follows that he must also discuss the question of Jesus' priestly ministry in relation to the Law and the covenant of which the Law was constitutive.

<sup>40</sup> Moses is the μεσίτης of the first covenant (cf. *As. Mos.* 1:14; see Johannes Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition with Commentary* [SVTP 10; Leiden: Brill, 1993], 6 [the Greek text is noted in the critical apparatus to lines 17–19], 230–31; Gal 3:19–20; cf. Philo, *Mos.* 2:166). Thus Moses continues to be an important figure in Hebrews. Here, Moses is the link between heaven and the system of atonement prescribed by the Law. Moses builds the tabernacle in accordance with the model (τύπος) he saw on the mountain. The author probably envisions Moses having seen the heavenly tabernacle upon his ascent of Sinai into heaven (see section 3.2.1). In any case, the discussion of the correspondence between the earthly tabernacle and the heavenly tabernacle that drives much of Heb 9 suggests that the author thinks of the “model” Moses saw as the true tabernacle which the Lord made (cf. 8:2) and that Jesus entered when he ascended into heaven.

καίνη) with Israel and Judah (Heb 8:8); 2) the promise that this coming covenant will involve God writing his laws on his people's minds and hearts (8:10); and 3) the promise that as part of the terms of this covenant, the people's sins will no longer be remembered (8:12).

The first promise—the promise of the institution of the new covenant itself—comes directly from the prophetic word of God given by Jeremiah regarding the people's failure to remain in the first covenant that God made with them (Heb 8:9; Jer 31:32, MT [38:32, LXX]). The author, therefore, predicates God's promise of a new covenant on the failure of the people to keep the first covenant.<sup>41</sup> Yet, the implication that the first covenant also bears some of the blame is near at hand. The prophetic promise implies that the first covenant failed because it did not result in the people obtaining perfection and receiving their inheritance. Inherent in the new covenant promise is God's commitment to make sure that Israel and Judah obtain the inheritance intended for them all along. The people's refusal to enter the land at Kadesh Barnea epitomizes the failure of the first covenant. But God will establish a new covenant with Israel and Judah that ensures the

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<sup>41</sup> In the context of Hebrews, one thinks here of the failure of the people at Kadesh Barnea (Heb 3:7–18). The people's failure, in other words, was their refusal to obey God and go in faith into the inheritance that was promised to them. That this was as much a fault with the first covenant as with the people is suggested by the fact that their failure indicates that the first covenant was not able to move the people into the promised inheritance, nor, in the author's opinion, has it done so since that time (cf. Heb 4:8–9; 8:7–8). Such an interpretation of Jer 31 together with Num 14 and the ongoing failure of the people to obtain the inheritance is likely suggested to the author by the fact of the exile (see also *L.A.B.* 19:12–13; 23: 11–13, where God's people only get the fullness of the promised land in the resurrection). This is likely what the author has in mind when he states that the Law was never able to make anything perfect (cf. Heb 7:19). That is, insofar as perfection in Hebrews is linked with obtaining the heavenly inheritance, i.e., achieving the τέλος or goal of God's promised inheritance (see chapter three of this study), it follows that the people's inability initially to enter and later to hold on to the land implies that they were not enabled by the first covenant fully to obtain the promises. A new covenant is required.

people receive the blessings God promised to them. This new covenant, in other words, will do what the first covenant never did—bring about perfection.

Just as the author has consistently compared and contrasted the priesthood of the Mosaic Law with that of heavenly priesthood, so he here draws on the pattern of Moses as the mediator of the first covenant as a point of comparison and contrast with the promise of the institution of a new covenant. The first covenant had Moses as its μεσίτης. The writer identifies the μεσίτης of the new covenant as Jesus.

The fittingness of Jesus to serve in this specific capacity is never directly argued by the author. Nevertheless, his citation of Ps 40, coupled with the emphasis in the homily on Jesus' faithful and sinless suffering, suggests that one of the central reasons why Jesus can serve as the mediator of the new covenant is that he lived out the very obedience to God promised in Jeremiah to all God's people under the new covenant. Jesus' faithful and sinless life, death, and subsequent resurrection all indicate that he lived the kind of life that exemplifies what it means to have God's laws written in one's mind and written upon one's heart. A closer look at Ps 40 lends weight to this assertion.

#### ***4.3.1.1.1 Psalm 40:7–9a in its Septuagintal Context***

Earlier in this study I highlighted the importance of the motif of the righteous sufferer being saved from death for understanding Jesus' cry to the one who could save him from death and his being heard (Heb 5:7).<sup>42</sup> It follows a general parenetic pattern of faithful suffering receiving God's promises in Hebrews. Jesus' faith in the midst of his

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<sup>42</sup> See section 3.4.1.



trial and his subsequent reception of the eschatological realities reserved for God's people, especially that of the better resurrection, serves as the example *par excellence* of this pattern.

Given the significance of this pattern in Hebrews, the original context of Ps 40:7–9a (39:7–9a LXX) is intriguing. In the Septuagint, Ps 39 is one of the many psalms beginning with the superscription εἰς τὸ τέλος. I noted in chapter two of this study that for Second Temple Jews inclined to read scripture in light of the conviction that they live in the last days (cf. Heb 1:2), such a comment would readily suggest an eschatological dimension or frame for interpreting the psalm.<sup>43</sup> It may be significant that, quite apart from the Greek superscription, the psalm's themes of enduring suffering while waiting on the Lord, and of God lifting the one who waits out of the pit and setting that one upon a rock, were understood by some later rabbis as referring to the eschatological salvation of Israel.<sup>44</sup>

In any case, the portion of the psalm cited in Hebrews follows several verses in which the psalmist testifies about his own endurance of suffering and his deliverance. He

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<sup>43</sup> See section 2.4.1.1 n. 65. It is unlikely that the translator(s) of the psalms intended eschatological significance every time לְמַנְצָא is translated by the phrase εἰς τὸ τέλος (see the helpful discussion of this issue in Albert Pietersma, "Septuagintal Exegesis and the Superscriptions of the Greek Psalter," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* [ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller; VTSupp 99; Leiden: Brill, 2005], 443–75, esp. 468–71). Martin Rösel, however, points out that in Ps 29 LXX the phrase is used in collocation with a reference to the dedication of a house for David—a comment likely to lend itself to an eschatological interpretation ("Die Psalmüberschriften des Septuaginta-Psalter," in *Der Septuaginta-Psalter: Sprachliche und Theologische Aspekte* [ed. Erich Zenger; Freiburg: Herder, 2001], 125–48, esp. 137–39). Moreover, some later Christian interpreters took the phrase in an eschatological sense (see Pietersma, "Septuagintal Exegesis," 470–71). It seems probable that the author of Hebrews would be inclined to read the phrase in eschatological terms, particularly insofar as he already understands Jesus to be the anointed Davidic king who has suffered and been vindicated (cf. Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 107).

<sup>44</sup> See *Midr. Ps.* 40.

begins by emphasizing that he endured while waiting on the Lord (ὑπομένων ὑπέμεινα τὸν κύριον, 39:2). He then states that God heard his cry (εἰσήκουσεν τῆς δεήσεώς μου, 39:2). He goes on to describe the deliverance he received in terms of God leading him out of a miserable pit (ἀνήγαγέν με ἐκ λάκκου ταλαιπωρίας, 39:3) and miry clay, standing his feet upon a rock, and making his steps straight. As a result of this salvation the psalmist says, in effect, that he has become a witness to many others. This witness entails a testimonial component and an exemplary component.

The testimonial part of his witness involves such verbal attestation as his singing a new song, a hymn (ῥυθμός) to God (39:4). He also “proclaims and speaks” (ἀπήγγειλα καὶ ἐλάλησα) about God’s innumerable wonders and deeds (39:6). This motif of testifying continues later in the psalm when the speaker declares that he announces righteousness in the great congregation (εὐηγγελισάμην δικαιοσύνην ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ μεγάλῃ, 39:10). Rather than keeping what he knows about God’s righteousness and mercy to himself, he speaks openly about God’s truth and salvation, not hiding God’s mercy and truth from the great assembly (οὐκ ἔκρυψα τὸ ἔλεός σου καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειάν σου ἀπὸ συναγωγῆς πολλῆς, 39:11).

The exemplary element for the psalmist consists partly in the public nature of his salvation. Many will see what has happened and be afraid (ὄψονται πολλοὶ καὶ φοβηθήσονται, 39:4c). As a result, they will hope in the Lord (καὶ ἐλπιοῦσιν ἐπὶ κύριον, 39:4d). Those whose hope is in the name of the Lord are called “Blessed” (μακάριος ἀνὴρ, οὗ ἐστὶν τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου ἐλπίς αὐτοῦ, 39:5). Verses 7–9 appear to be most closely related to the exemplary element of the psalmist’s witness to God’s

salvation. Apart from the word σῶμα, the Göttingen edition of the LXX prints these verses as follows:

θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας, σῶμα<sup>45</sup> δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι·  
ὀλοκαυτώμα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἤτησας. τότε εἶπον Ἰδοὺ ἤκω, ἐν

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<sup>45</sup> This reading finds support in **Σ** B A and the rest of the MSS Rahlfs refers to with the siglum “rel.” in the Göttingen edition. The MT here reads **קָטַח־בָּשָׂר**. In keeping with the MT, the Göttingen edition opts for ὠτία. The apparatus lists support for ὠτία as La<sup>G</sup>, Ga, and, according to the Hexaplaric evidence (see the edition of Fields), α' σ' θ' ε' and εβρ' (where the Syro-Hexapla indicates the transliteration was ωσναίμ). Recently Pierre Grelot has argued that the fourth–fifth century majuscules listed above read σῶμα as a result of Christian scribes altering the original ὠτία under the influence of Heb 10:5 (Pierre Grelot, “Le Texte du Psaume 39,7 dans La Septante,” *RB* 108 [2001]: 210–13; cf. Karen H. Jobes, “The Function of Paronomasia in Hebrews 10:5–7,” *TrinJ* 13 [1992]: 181–91, esp. n. 17). The lack of a complete critical edition of the LXX Psalms makes a text-critical assessment difficult. To be sure, Grelot’s argument is plausible, and Rahlfs probably had similar reasons for printing ὠτία instead of σῶμα. Regardless of which term more likely stood in the hypothetical Septuagintal *Urtext*, there are good reasons to think the author of Hebrews knew a Greek version of the psalm which read σῶμα. Susan Docherty’s recent study of Hebrews’ citation of Jewish Scripture, which takes seriously Jewish practices of textual citation as well as the fluidity of both the Hebrew and the Greek text forms in the Second Temple period, persuasively demonstrates that the LXX citations in the first few chapters of Hebrews are likely to be highly faithful to the Greek text the author knows (Susan E. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews* [WUNT 2/260; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009]). Text internal evidence in Heb 10 further corroborates Docherty’s conclusion. An exhaustive discussion lies beyond the scope of this study, but three points are worth highlighting. First, the language of “will/desire” is prominent in Heb 10. The writer finds the terms θέλω and θέλημα in the Greek psalm and then uses them in both his explication of the psalm and in his exhortation in chapter ten (see 10:8, 9, 10, 36). Outside of Heb 10, the verb θέλω occurs twice (12:17; 13:18). The noun θέλημα occurs only once where, significantly, it echoes the discussion of Ps 40 in Heb 10 (see 13:21—[ὁ θεὸς] καταρτίσαι ὑμᾶς ... εἰς τὸ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ). Apart from these instances, the θελ- root shows up only in the θέλησις of 2:4. This use of θελ- terminology, and θέλημα in particular, suggests that the author employs the language in Heb 10 under the influence of the psalm. A similar phenomenon may be occurring with ἀλήθεια and εὐδοκέω as well. The former shows up in Hebrews only in 10:26 (see the three occurrences in Ps 39:11–12 LXX; see also the cognate form in Heb 8:2; 9:24; 10:22). The latter occurs in the author’s version of Ps 39:7 LXX (the Göttingen reads “ἤτησας” here and lists only the Boharic, Sahidic, and MS 1013 in support of εὐδόκησας) and in Ps 39:14 LXX. In Hebrews the word is found only in 10:6, 8, and the citation of Hab 2:3–4 in Heb 10:37–38. Notably, Hab 2:3–4 contains two more verbs that occur also in Ps 39 LXX and are unique to Heb 10: ἤκω, in collocation with ἔρχομαι (cf. Heb 10:5–7); and, χρονίζω (cf. Ps 39:18 LXX). With these observations in mind, the second point to note is that the word σῶμα does not occur in the homily until Heb 10 (see 10:5, 10, 22; 13:3, 11). The total absence of the term until the citation of Ps 40 and the following explication and exhortation in Heb 10 is telling. As with θέλημα, the word first shows up in relation to Ps 40 and is probably repeated in Hebrews under the influence of the psalm. A third observation, though, greatly strengthens the case for the presence of σῶμα in the author’s version of the psalm. If he did change the version he knew from “ears,” it would have made a great deal more sense for him to have placed the language of either “blood” or “flesh” in the psalmist’s mouth here. Unlike σῶμα, the terms “blood” and “flesh” have both been used of Jesus (e.g., 2:14) and are both employed in the summary of the argument being made in Heb 8–10 regarding Jesus’ offering (see 10:19–20). Additionally, “blood” would better suit the contrast that is being made with the αἶμα of bulls

κεφαλίδι βιβλίου γέγραπται περὶ ἐμοῦ· τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου, ὁ θεός μου, ἐβουλήθην καὶ τὸν νόμον σου ἐν μέσῳ τῆς κοιλίας μου.

Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but a body you prepared for me. Burnt offering and sin offering do not please you. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come. In the scroll of the book it has been written for me. I desire to do your will, my God, and (I desire) your Law in my inmost self.’

In keeping with the surrounding context, the psalmist’s salvation out of the pit correlates with his remaining alive, and specifically being present in a body, rather than sinking forever in the pit and clay—language that seems to connote death.<sup>46</sup> With his rescued life he now desires to do God’s will and internalize God’s Law so that his life can please God in ways that sacrifices do not do.

Put differently, the psalmist hints that as a result of his salvation he desires to make his body his offering to God—i.e., to internalize God’s Law such that he can live out God’s will. The parallel structure of vv. 7–9 corroborates this. Thus the statement of 39:7b (“a body you have prepared for me”) counters the negative statement of 39:7a (God does not desire sacrifice and offering). In place of these sacrifices undesired by God stands the body of the speaker. This body is something God does desire. Similarly, 39:7c presents another negative statement that clearly parallels 39:7a—God is not pleased with burnt offering and offering for sins. The psalmist’s comment in 39:8–9 parallels the briefer comment of 39:7b. His desire to do God’s will and have the Law placed within

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and goats in 10:4 (cf. 9:12–14; also 10:10 D\*). In all likelihood, then, σῶμα shows up in Heb 10 simply because the version of Ps 40 known to the author contained it (see Georg Braulik, *Psalm 40 und der Gottesknecht* [FB 18; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1975], 285).

<sup>46</sup> See John Goldingay, *Psalms* (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 1: 570–71.

him helps explicate what it means to have a body that pleases God—such a body enacts or lives out God’s Law.

The psalm therefore implies that a life of full obedience to God’s Law, motivated by the Law’s being internalized, ultimately satisfies what God wills and desires better than the Levitical sacrifices do. Such an act of offering correlates with the living witness, both seen and heard, that the psalmist desires to become. He wants many to see not only his redemption, but also the Law incarnate—a life of exemplary obedience. Through the psalmist’s example many others not only hear the account of salvation and the praise of God, but also see what righteousness is.

In vv. 13–18 the psalmist shifts focus, pouring out in prayer his concern for his own sin and his deadly circumstances. He calls again upon God for deliverance and vindication. The unanticipated change in tone is curious and puzzles modern interpreters.<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, the latter half of the psalm is not discussed in the rabbinic midrash on the psalm.<sup>48</sup> John Goldingay helpfully suggests that the last portion of the psalm intends to show the continual need for the supplicant to return to God for deliverance.<sup>49</sup> The last two verses further suggest that such crying out needs to be done with faith in the God who has delivered in the past, as has already been demonstrated in the psalmist’s own life described in the first part of the psalm.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The abrupt change in tone has led some to speculate that vv. 14–18 were a later addition to Ps 40 (see the brief and helpful discussion in Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:568). There is no manuscript evidence, however, to suggest that an attenuated version of the psalm circulated during the Second Temple period.

<sup>48</sup> See *Midr. Ps.* 40.

<sup>49</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:576–79.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

On its own terms, the Septuagintal version of Ps 40 presents someone who endures suffering while crying out to God for salvation. God’s salvific deliverance does come and serves as the impetus for the supplicant’s public witness—involving both verbal testimony and lived example. As part of putting this witness into effect, the psalmist desires to do God’s will fully—to internalize God’s Law. Such embodied obedience, he claims, puts righteousness on display and pleases God more than any of the sacrifices. This public witness also serves to foster faith in the midst of renewed trials since God’s salvation has already been seen and proclaimed.

#### ***4.3.1.1.2 Psalm 40:7–9a in Hebrews 10***

The author of Hebrews cites only a small portion of Ps 40 (Ps 39:7–9a LXX). Much in the broader context of the psalm, however, resonates with both the larger context of the homily and the near context of Heb 10. An examination of these points of resonance suggests that the writer’s citation of Ps 40 functions metaleptically.<sup>51</sup> Elements from the larger context of the psalm, that is, inform the author’s discussion in Heb 10. In particular, the emphasis in Ps 40 on the redemption of the righteous sufferer from the pit, the paradigmatic witness of the delivered one, and the internalization of God’s Law expressed by a life of obedience to God coheres with the logic of Heb 10. I discuss first some of the motifs in the initial portion of Ps 40 that accord well with other portions of Hebrews. This is not to suggest that Ps 40 serves as a pervasive intertext for the whole of

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<sup>51</sup> Richard B. Hays explains metalepsis as a literary echo that links two texts such that, “the figurative effect of the echo can lie in the unstated or suppressed points of resonance between the two texts” (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 20). Readers rightly interpret such allusive echoes in a given text—say, text B—by understanding text B, “in light of a broad interplay with text A, encompassing aspects of A beyond those explicitly echoed [in B]” (Ibid.).

the homily. I highlight these points to establish the likelihood that the presence of motifs in Ps 40 so similar to the larger concerns of Hebrews would probably have been noted by the author. After highlighting these larger themes, I then look specifically at points of coherence between Ps 40 and Heb 10.

The first eleven verses of the Greek version of the psalm contain a number of motifs that remind the reader of significant elements in Hebrews. I have already noted the theme of the suffering individual crying out to God and being delivered. Within that motif, however, some specific language occurs that has already shown up in the discussion of Jesus' suffering and deliverance in Heb 5:7. Just as the psalmist says in Ps 39:2 LXX that God heard his cry (εἰσήκουσεν τῆς δεήσεώς μου), so also the author of Hebrews has already depicted Jesus in 5:7 calling upon God with a cry (δεήσεις) and being heard (εἰσακουσθείς). Apart from "being heard," the author of Hebrews also speaks of Jesus' deliverance in terms of God "bringing up" (ἀνάγω) Jesus out of the dead ones in 13:20 (cf. Ps 39:3).

Quite apart from the pattern of Jesus' faithful endurance informing the author's parenthesis, Jesus also witnesses to God's salvation by way of verbal testimony in Hebrews in a fashion similar to that of the psalmist in Ps 40. In Heb 2:10 the author puts Ps 21:23 LXX in the mouth of Jesus. Thus, in the context of the elevated Jesus being "seen" by the audience (2:8–9), the author has Jesus proclaiming God's name to his brothers and sisters and singing praise to God in the midst of the congregation (ἀπαγγελῶ τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ὑμνήσω σε; cf. Ps 21:26 LXX). The similar language in Ps 40 of the delivered psalmist singing a hymn to God (v. 4), many seeing

him and trusting in God's name (vv. 4–5), and proclaiming God's deeds (v. 6) and righteousness in the great congregation (v. 10) are striking. Hebrews portrays Jesus behaving like the delivered psalmist in Ps 40.

As noted above, I am not suggesting that the writer speaks about Jesus crying out, being heard, being seen, declaring God's praise in the congregation, or being led out of death under the direct influence of Ps 40. Rather, as his citation of Ps 22:23 in Heb 2 suggests, the language used by the author is probably drawn more broadly from the notion of a suffering supplicant being delivered, a theme that shows up throughout the psalms,<sup>52</sup> as well as other places in Jewish scripture.<sup>53</sup> I am, however, arguing that it is highly unlikely, given the writer's use of the motif of the righteous sufferer being delivered, that the presence of these very themes in Ps 40, particularly those in the first eleven verses, would have gone unnoticed by him when he directly cited the psalm in Heb 10. It would likely be too much to claim that the presence of these themes in Ps 40 led him to draw vv. 7–9a into his homily, but it would probably be too little to assume that the presence of these themes in Ps 40 went unnoticed as he cited those verses in Heb 10.<sup>54</sup>

I have already pointed out that the combination of a reference to the Son entering the κόσμος and the assumption that Jesus' body was offered at his death have led most interpreters to identify the cross as the implied location where Jesus' body was offered

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<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Pss 30; 31; 35.

<sup>53</sup> E.g., Jon 2:2–9.

<sup>54</sup> Commentators are remarkably silent on the points of overlap between Ps 40 and the depiction of Jesus in the homily.



(Heb 10:10). The question of the implied emphasis in Heb 10:10, however, is important. Is Jesus' obedient death being emphasized as the place and time where atonement occurs, or is Jesus' deliverance out of death crucial for understanding where and when the atoning offering was made and atonement was effected?

Apart from the explicit statements in Hebrews that Jesus presented his offering in heaven, the preceding discussion of Ps 40, and especially the author's larger interest in the motif of the righteous sufferer's deliverance, point toward another possibility. When he cites Ps 40 in Heb 10, the emphasis for him more likely falls on the idea of Jesus as the delivered righteous sufferer *par excellence* than on that idea of Jesus as the one who suffered and died obediently. The former follows from the latter, and the latter is of great importance in Hebrews, but is it the locus of the offering that makes atonement? The writer's appeal to Ps 40 suggests that the Son's deliverance as the righteous sufferer is the key point. Put differently, the motif of the righteous sufferer's deliverance from the clutches of death and desire to witness to God's salvation in Ps 40 coheres with the author's confession throughout Hebrews that Jesus has been delivered from the realm of death. The suffering precedes the deliverance, but the deliverance is the focal point, not the suffering itself.

Having demonstrated that the language and themes of the first portion of Ps 40 resonate with several elements in the larger context of the homily, I now consider whether elements from the broader context of the psalm play a role in the argument of Heb 10. Four factors suggest not only that the author alludes to the psalm throughout Heb 10, but also that these allusions inform the line of reasoning in this portion of the homily.

First, a handful of terms in Ps 39 LXX also show up for the first time in Heb 10.<sup>55</sup> One of these is the verb ὑπομένω. A prominent feature of Ps 39:2 LXX is the collocation of a participial and finite verb forms of ὑπομένω (i.e., ὑπομένων ὑπέμεινα). This emphatic language of patient endurance (literally, “while enduring, I endured”) is consistent with the stress in Hebrews on holding fast and waiting patiently for God to act even in the midst of great suffering. Curiously, though, the specific terminology ὑπομένω/ὑπομονή does not show up in the homily until Heb 10 (see 10:32, 36).<sup>56</sup> Prior to this chapter the author has utilized terms whose semantic domains, particularly in the context of hortatory material, overlap with that of ὑπομένω/ὑπομονή language. Thus one finds him using words such as προσέχω (2:1), κατέχω (3:6, 14; cf. 10:23), ὑποστάσεως (3:14), παρρησία (3:6, 4:16; cf. 10:19, 35), and μακροθυμία (6:12, 15) in parenthetic portions of the homily both before and within Heb 10. Only after the citation of Ps 40, however, does the ὑπομένω/ὑπομονή terminology occur.

This may simply be a coincidence. Yet, the fact that other terms in the psalm also occur in Heb 10 suggests another explanation. The language of “endurance” first shows up after the quote from Ps 39 LXX because the larger context of the psalm is informing the author’s discourse. In particular, the psalm speaks of endurance in the midst of suffering, suffering that can be depicted in terms of death. Thus the author’s use of the language of “endurance/ὑπομένω” together with a mention of suffering in Heb 10:32 likely results from the fact that this language is present in Ps 39:2 LXX. Just as terms

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<sup>55</sup> I discussed the terms σῶμα, θέλημα, ἀλήθεια, εὐδοκέω, and ἦκω in n. 45.

<sup>56</sup> See the preceding note.

such as σῶμα and θέλω/θέλημα enter the homily because they are part of Ps 40, so also the psalm's language of ὑπομένω/ὑπομονή likely shows up in Heb 10 because its presence in Ps 39 LXX attracted his attention.<sup>57</sup>

Second, Heb 10 contains the pattern of endurance in suffering resulting in the reception of God's promised deliverance. The prevalence of this pattern throughout Hebrews makes the mere occurrence of the motif in Heb 10 potentially insignificant for the case at hand. Interestingly, though, the author employs terms found in Ps 39 LXX when discussing this motif here. Particularly telling is the statement in 10:36: “ὑπομονῆς γὰρ ἔχετε χρεῖαν ἵνα τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ποιήσαντες κομίσησθε τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν.” The correspondence of the motif of endurance receiving God's promises and the use of terminology that has thus far only been employed in Hebrews *after* the citation from Ps 40 (the nominal form of ὑπομένω and the noun θέλημα) corroborates the inference that the author continues to reflect on Ps 40 as his discourse moves forward.

Third, the collocation of terms just noted in Heb 10:36 form part of the author's introduction to an allusion to Isa 26:20 (Heb 10:37a) and a citation of Hab 2:3–4 (Heb 10:37b–38). A number of terms occur in the Habakkuk citation that are conspicuous earlier in Heb 10 and/or show up in Ps 39 LXX. One prominent feature of the author's citation of Habakkuk is the collocation “ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἥξω” (Hab 2:3; Heb 10:37b). The similarity between this clause and the introduction to the citation of Ps 40 where the

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<sup>57</sup> This is not to imply that other factors are not also at play. For example, the presence of ὑπομένω language in Hab 2:3a needs to be considered. As will be shown below, however, Ps 40 and Hab 2:3–4 are being read as mutually informing each other.

author depicts Christ as εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον (10:5) and then saying, “ἴδὸν ἦκω” (10:7) is probably intentional. The writer likely desired to read Ps 40:7–9a together with Hab 2:3–4 all along. Put differently, just as he crafted his introduction to Hab 2:3–4 in terms of Ps 40, he also crafted the introduction to his citation of Ps 40 in terms of the language of Hab 2:3. I discuss Hab 2:3–4 and Isa 26:20 in detail below. Here I point out that this recognition suggests an *inclusio*. The discussion between the two citations (i.e., Heb 10:9–36; precisely where so many terms that occur in Ps 40 are used) should therefore be interpreted in relation to the textual citations and the allusion that bracket it.

A fourth feature in Heb 10 that suggests the influence of Ps 40 concerns the strong conceptual link between the psalmist’s desire to have the Law internalized (Ps 39:9b LXX) and the author’s return in Heb 10:16 to the very part of the new covenant promise where Jeremiah explicates the nature of that covenant as the internalization of the Law (Jer 38:34 LXX; cf. Heb 8:10). The conceptual similarity between these texts is hard to miss for anyone familiar with the larger context of the psalm. The psalmist desires the very thing the new covenant promises.

If the author’s discussion here is informed by the larger context of Ps 40—and the points noted above support this inference—then the precise way he has cited Ps 40 may further reflect his concern with the topic of the Law’s internalization in Ps 40 and, in particular, the way in which Jesus illustrates that internalization. Curiously, he has lifted the citation out of the psalm in such a way as to 1) alter its syntax, though not its

wording;<sup>58</sup> and 2) neatly excise the expression of the psalmist's desire to have the Law internalized. Given this careful recontextualization of Ps 39:7–9a LXX, the lack of reference to the internalization of the Law (Ps 39:7b) within a larger discussion of the new covenant's promise of the internalization of the Law calls for explanation.

Relying on the Göttingen edition the likely structure of Ps 39:8–9 available to the author consisted of the following five clauses:

8a τότε εἶπον  
 8b Ἴδου ἤκω,  
 8c ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου γέγραπται περὶ ἐμοῦ·  
 9a τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου, ὁ θεός μου, ἐβουλήθην  
 9b καὶ τὸν νόμον σου ἐν μέσῳ τῆς κοιλίας μου.

By using indentation to indicate dependence, one can more see clearly the syntactical relationships among the clauses.

8a τότε εἶπον  
 8b Ἴδου ἤκω,  
 8c ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου  
     γέγραπται  
     περὶ ἐμοῦ·  
 9a τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου, ὁ θεός μου,  
     ἐβουλήθην  
 9b καὶ  
     τὸν νόμον σου ἐν μέσῳ τῆς κοιλίας μου.

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<sup>58</sup> I detail the alteration below. Here I want to recognize the factors that complicate definitive conclusions regarding the author's textual alterations. Since it is impossible to know the exact form of the author's Greek *Vorlage*, identifying points where he has altered scripture as he knows it is exceedingly difficult, far more difficult than is often recognized by commentators (cf. Docherty, *Use of the Old Testament*, esp. 124–27). In this instance, however, there is no MSS evidence to suggest the syntax the author presents when he cites Ps 39:9 reflects a version of Ps 39 LXX in circulation.

From this structural analysis three points may be noted. First, 8a introduces a quotation, and clauses 8b–9b form the content of that quotation.<sup>59</sup> Second, 8b–9b consists of three independent clauses. Third, apart from ἐβουλήθην, the predicate portion of the last clause consists of the complimentary infinitive τοῦ ποιῆσαι and its two objects τὸ θέλημά σου and τὸν νόμον σου. The psalmist’s desire is therefore two-fold: to do God’s will, and to do or keep God’s Law “in the midst of my belly” (ἐν μέσῳ τῆς κοιλίας μου).

The citation and explication of Ps 39:8–9a LXX in Hebrews alters the syntax of these verses significantly. I have used ellipses below to indicate a parenthetical comment.

Within Hebrews the wording and syntax of the verses runs as follows:

8a	τότε εἶπον	
8b	ἰδοὺ ἤκω ...	
8c		ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου
		γέγραπται
		περὶ ἐμοῦ·
9a	... τοῦ ποιῆσαι	ὁ θεός τὸ θέλημά σου.

From this analysis one sees immediately that the author of Hebrews has taken the complimentary infinitive from the predicate in 9a and made it dependent upon ἤκω in 8b.<sup>60</sup> By ending the citation immediately before ἐβουλήθην of Ps 39:9a LXX, he offers a substantially different interpretation of the syntax of these verses without changing the wording in any substantive way.<sup>61</sup> Now, instead of desiring to do God’s will and have the

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<sup>59</sup> Within Ps 39 LXX the quotation apparently continues for the rest of the psalm.

<sup>60</sup> That this is how the author applies LXX Ps 39:9 to Jesus becomes particularly clear in Heb 10:9 where he takes Ps 39:8b and 9a as one clause.

<sup>61</sup> Relative to the Göttingen edition the only difference is the apparently minor variation in the placement of the interjection ὁ θεός and the lack of the enclitic pronoun μου. These differences may well reflect little

Law internalized, the speaker—understood here to be Christ himself—claims to have come precisely to actualize that will. In other words, this speaker is prepared to realize the obedience which the psalmist could only desire.

The fact that the author of Hebrews places these verses in the mouth of Jesus and makes the desire for obedience expressed in the psalm a reality for Jesus' earthly life leaves little doubt that the psalm is being refracted through a christological lens. The Son who faithfully and sinlessly endured the suffering of the days of his flesh is the one who can rightfully claim not just to desire God's will, *but actually to have done it*. The writer's interpretation of Ps 39:9 LXX therefore suggests that he has carefully crafted the citation without changing the wording in any significant way in order to use it for the purpose of highlighting the perfect obedience of the Son. Jesus comes into the world to live the life the psalmist desires to live, one of embodied obedience that pleases God more than the sacrifices prescribed in the Law. Living this life is precisely what the author of Hebrews thinks Jesus did (cf. 4:15).

Absolute certainty concerning the author's understanding of Ps 39:9b LXX is not possible. Nevertheless, the parallel in the psalm between God's will and the internalization of God's Law coupled with the writer's own discussion of the new covenant's internalization of the Law and his direct exhortation to do God's will in 10:36 all suggest that he has not ignored this element of the psalm. The points of overlap

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more than a minor transposition in the form of the psalm known to the author (relative to the form printed in the Göttingen edition).

between the motifs and language in Heb 10 with the motifs and language of Ps 40 support the supposition that the author uses Ps 40 to present Jesus as the one who perfectly lived the very obedience to God that the new covenant promises. Christ, in other words, obeyed God's will completely during his time on earth.

It may be objected that if the author wanted to make clear that Jesus exemplifies the internalization of the Law, he could have cited more of Ps 40. Certainly the writer could have gone on to include Ps 39:9b LXX in a more obvious fashion. The preceding discussion, however, provides a plausible rationale for why more of the psalm does not find explicit citation. In particular, the author has excerpted just enough of the psalm to make the point that Jesus lived the obedience the psalmist desires. To have cited more of the psalm would have complicated the christological point the author seeks to make. This is not to say that he treats the psalm merely as a tool for his Christology. As noted above, his careful citation of the psalm suggests a high level of respect for the actual language of the psalm. He has not rewritten the psalm. Rather, he draws this bit of the psalm out in order to show that Jesus has done what the psalmist desires but is not completely able to do (see Ps 40:12–18).

#### ***4.3.1.1.3 Jesus the Mediator and Psalm 40 in Hebrews 10***

Recognizing the way in which the author has cited Ps 40 and the allusive presence of the psalm throughout Heb 10 helps shed light on the logic of this portion of the homily. Jesus' life of faithful obedience enables his body to be offered to God as the sacrifice that fully satisfies what God desires. Jesus' obedience and faithful endurance, in other words, exemplify what having the Law written upon one's heart looks like. Thus



Jesus' bodily offering is in accord with God's will (ἐν ᾧ θελήματι, 10:10; cf. 10:7, 9 where the "will" the Son comes to do is clearly that of God).

This last point suggests that the author's interest in the internalization of the Law promised in Jer 31 and desired in Ps 40 converge in the exemplary witness of Jesus. Earlier in the homily he asserted that Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant promised in Jer 31. His discussion of Ps 40, particularly when the ongoing allusions to the psalm in Heb 10 are noted, helps demonstrate that Jesus is, albeit implicitly, especially suited to be the mediator of this covenant. Because he lived with the Law within, he is an appropriate mediator of the covenant that promises this kind of life to all God's people. Significantly too, he is able to present his body to God as a fully effective atoning offering.<sup>62</sup>

Thus far the question of the content of Jesus' offering affirms the legitimacy of the widely accepted reading of the passage that Jesus' lived obedience is part of what Jesus offers when he offers his body. This study does not intend to suggest that Jesus' body and embodied obedience are to be split apart when Jesus' body was offered to the Father. The issue is whether that offering is assumed by the author to have culminated in Jesus' death on the cross.

As noted above, the author's citation of and ongoing allusions to Ps 40 in Heb 10 suggest that the Son's *deliverance* out of suffering is a central theme in Heb 10. Could it be that the author conceived of Jesus' body being offered in terms of his deliverance out of death rather than, as is widely assumed, the event of his death per se? To put the

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<sup>62</sup> See Braulik, who argues for intentional links between Ps 40:9 and Jer 31 (*Psalms 40*, 288–93).

question differently, at what moment was God pleased by the offering of Jesus' body in a way that other sacrifices and offerings did not please him? Was it when that body died? Or, could it be when Jesus entered the heavenly tabernacle and presented his body before God? It is worth noting here that insofar as the moment depicted at the very beginning of the homily—the entry of the perfected Son Jesus into the οἰκουμένη—correlates well with concept of the Son's entry into God's heavenly presence in 9:23–28, the declarations of God in Heb 1 (i.e., the command to the angels to worship the Son and the invitation to the Son to sit on the throne at his right hand) can easily be interpreted as expressions of God's good pleasure with respect to the Son. I would point out further that the case laid out in chapter two of this study—that Jesus entered heaven with his human body—certainly allows for the presumption that Jesus' body was offered to God in heaven. I suggest that the development of the rest of the argument of Heb 10 and the presence of other biblical allusions in the chapter also corroborate the supposition that heaven is the location of the offering of Jesus' body, not the earthly moment of his death on the cross.

#### ***4.3.1.2 Habakkuk 2:3–4 and Isaiah 26:20 in the Parenthesis of Hebrews 10***

As pointed out above, both Ps 39:2 LXX and Hab 2:3 LXX use ὑπομένω language, though the author of Hebrews does not cite those portions of these two passages. In the latter case he replaces the ὑπομένω language of Hab 2:3a with a collocation of terms that occurs in Isa 26:20 (μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον).<sup>63</sup> The Isa 26:20

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<sup>63</sup> See also the extensive citation of Isa 26 in Odes 5, Isaiah's Prayer. These are the only passages in the LXX as we know it where the collocation μικρὸς ὅσος ὅσος occurs. Many commentators recognize the allusion to Isa 26:20 here (see, e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 301).

allusion will be discussed momentarily. Here I highlight the fact that, in addition to ὑπομένω, both Ps 39 LXX and Hab 2:3–4 LXX also use the verbs χρονίζω (see Ps 39:18 LXX) and εὐδοκέω (see Ps 39:14 LXX). The author’s recontextualization of these verses at the end of Heb 10 indicates that this fact was not lost on him.

In Ps 39:18 LXX the psalmist’s cry for God not to delay (μὴ χρονίσης) is part of a prayer for deliverance out of suffering. The call for God to be pleased to deliver the one suffering in the time of need (εὐδόκησον κύριε τοῦ ῥύσασθαί με κύριε εἰς τὸ βοηθήσασθαι μοι πρόσχες, Ps 39:14 LXX) seeks to persuade God to desire, and thus actualize, the salvation of the supplicant.

In Hab 2:3–4 LXX the Lord responds to Habakkuk’s cry for justice against the evils of the Chaldeans (see Hab 1) by promising that a vision is coming that is in some way connected to a figure who will come<sup>64</sup> and who will not delay in bringing judgment.

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<sup>64</sup> The Göttingen LXX of the Habakkuk passage and the citation in Hebrews differ slightly from one another. The Göttingen of Hab 2:3 reads, “διότι ἔτι ὄρασις εἰς καιρὸν καὶ ἀνατελεῖ εἰς πέρας καὶ οὐκ εἰς κενόν· ἐὰν ὑστερήσῃ, ὑπόμεινον αὐτόν, ὅτι ἐρχόμενος ἤξει καὶ οὐ μὴ χρονίση.” Given the difficulty in knowing for certain what the Greek text available to the author looked like, hard and fast conclusions about how the writer might have changed the text as he cites it are not possible. With that caveat in view, one can note that the article before ἐρχόμενος in Heb 10:37b does not occur in Hab 2:3. This variant, whether from the text the author knows or, more likely, from the author himself, has the effect of clarifying the personal substantive meaning of the participle. The masculine αὐτόν and the masculine ἐρχόμενος are fascinating because they shift the subject as it stands in the MT and in 1QpHab from the “vision” (ὄρασις) and onto some unidentified individual (αὐτόν) who is coming (ἐρχόμενος). In Hebrew the “vision” is וִיזוֹן, a masculine noun that is the antecedent of the masculine pronoun וְ in the prepositional construction וְ. The word also serves as the implied subject of the masculine verb form וְ. The feminine Greek word ὄρασις, however, is not the antecedent of αὐτόν in the prepositional phrase that translates וְ (εἰς αὐτόν), nor is it the implied subject of the masculine participle ἐρχόμενος, which translates the Hebrew וְ וְ. The Greek should read εἰς αὐτήν and ἐρχόμενη in order to show that the vision is what is coming (as the Hebrew says). One suspects that the translator was rigidly rendering his Hebrew text to the point that he favored masculine terms for the masculine pronoun וְ and the verbal construction וְ וְ, even though this rendering has the effect in the translation of introducing a heretofore unidentified

God further promises that if the coming one should draw back, God’s “soul” will not be pleased (εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου) with that one. He adds, however, that his own faithfulness (ἐκ πίστεώς μου)<sup>65</sup> will enable the righteous one to live. God’s faithfulness, in other words, will ensure the success of the coming one in the task of bringing judgment on the Chaldeans.

The variations in Hab 2:3b–4 in Hebrews alter the interpretation of these verses in two significant ways. First, the author presents a hybrid text in which the initial clauses of Hab 2:3 have been replaced by a phrase from Isa 26:20. Second, in the context of Heb 10 the “coming one” refers to Jesus, but, unlike in the Septuagintal context of Hab 2:4, the righteous one who pleases God and lives *differs* from the “coming one.”<sup>66</sup>

First, then, the splicing of the peculiar phrase from Isa 26:20 LXX (μικρὸν ὄσον ὄσον) into this citation of Habakkuk draws attention to itself and is likely to be significant. The writer is likely to be speaking allusively and the nuances of the tapestry of biblical language he weaves here would probably be recognized by anyone well versed in the Septuagint. Of particular interest is the fact that Isa 26:19–21 contains clear

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masculine subject. In any case, the articular participle in the rendering the author of Hebrews presents only heightens the personal meaning of the participle—the arrival of a person is anticipated.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. column 17 line 30 of 8HevXIIgr (first century B.C.E.) where the rendering ΕΝΤΙΣΤΕΙΑΥΤΟΥ (“by/in his faith”) reflects a proto-MT *Vorlage*. See Emanuel Tov, *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever (8HevXIIgr) (The Seiyāl Collection 1)* (DJD 8; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 52.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Hays, *Conversion*, 132–33.

eschatological themes of ultimate reward and judgment.<sup>67</sup> This passage refers to the coming resurrection of the dead out of their tombs (ἀναστήσονται οἱ νεκροί, καὶ ἐγερθήσονται οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις, Isa 26:19) and God’s wrath falling upon the impious (cf. Isa 26:19, 21). God’s people are told to avoid this wrath by going into their houses and closing the doors for it will only be a little time (μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον) until the coming wrath passes by (26:20) and the people receive the promised blessing of resurrection (26:19).

The notion, prevalent in Hebrews, that God’s people must endure suffering before inheriting the eschatological promises is especially clear here in the context of Heb 10 (see Heb 10:23–25, 32–36, 39). In addition, the author also warns in Heb 10 of God’s coming wrath (i.e., Heb 10:26–31). For the writer it is those who fail to hold fast to their confession of Jesus who will not escape this coming judgment. The eschatological context of the entire homily (cf. 1:2) and the language of judgment and the enduring eternal realities that remain in 12:25–29 leave little doubt that the exhortations in Heb 10:23–36, 39 make reference to the coming of the eschatological judgment and reward.

With this in mind, the similar themes of eschatological judgment and reward in Isa 26:19–21 are all the more remarkable. The idea in Isa 26:19–21 that God’s people must hide themselves for a short time while God’s judgment comes upon the impious of the earth dovetails well with the concerns of Heb 10. It is not difficult to imagine that

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<sup>67</sup> Attridge observes, “The context [of the phrase from Isa 26:20], with its imagery of resurrection as well as judgment, suggests an eschatological scenario and probably facilitated the understanding of the phrase as a reference to the end time” (*Hebrews*, 301).

someone like the author of Hebrews could interpret a text where God's people are told to remain in their houses for a brief time while the wrath of God passes by to refer to enduring the final period of suffering for a brief time. Moreover, the promise of the resurrection of the dead in Isa 26:19 coheres with the conviction that God's eschatological judgment involves the reward of resurrection to enduring life as much as it does wrath for the impious. That the author of Hebrews does have the reward of resurrection in view is suggested not only by the evidence marshaled in the rest of this study, but also by the fact that one of the emphases in the very next portion of the homily is the receipt of the resurrection life that God's faithful ones look forward to inheriting.<sup>68</sup> It is not likely to be an accident that the author introduces this larger discussion with the comment that the righteous one will *live* by faith. With this in mind, I turn to the second observation regarding Hab 2:3–4 made above.

The second way in which the interpretation of the Habakkuk text in Heb 10 differs from its original context concerns the identification of the righteous one as someone other than the coming one. Earlier I pointed out that the similarity between the language in 10:5 and 7 of the Son coming into the world and saying "I have come" (Ps 39:8 LXX) and the reference in 10:37 to the future arrival of the coming one (Hab 2:3b LXX). Given these similarities, the "one who is coming," the one who "will come and will not delay," is to be identified with the Christ. Hebrews 10:37, in other words,

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Hays, *Conversion*, 134–35. For my discussion of resurrection and Heb 11 see section 3.3.2–3.

reiterates the affirmation of Heb 9:28—the Christ will appear a second time to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.<sup>69</sup>

This, however, suggests that the author imagines the righteous one who must not draw back as someone other than the “coming one” of Hab 2:3. The writer has already clarified in Heb 10:5–18 that the Son did what pleased God. Jesus did not draw back, but endured his suffering. This is why he now reigns at the right hand and will soon return. The one, or ones, who need to be sure not to shrink back must therefore be the “you” of Heb 10:36.

In fact, Heb 10:36 helps explain not only the logic of 10:37–39, but also how these verses relate to 10:5–10. The use of the language of “endurance” and the “doing the will of God” in 10:36 point the attentive auditor back to the comments made about Jesus earlier in Heb 10. I have already argued that these terms likely show up throughout Heb 10 on account of their presence in Ps 39 LXX. The author’s use of these terms here, and especially of the phrase τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ποιήσαντες, draws one’s attention back to the discussion of Jesus’ coming τοῦ ποιῆσαι ὁ θεὸς τὸ θέλημά σου (Heb 10:7, 9; cf. 10:10). The one who is coming shortly, in other words, is the one who has already come, the one who has already done the will of God, and pleased God with his offering. The pattern in 10:36 of enduring in doing God’s will in order to inherit the promise is

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<sup>69</sup> Such an understanding further accords with the reference to Christ presently seated on the throne awaiting the subjugation of all his enemies (Heb 10:12–13) and the idea in the context that the “day” is approaching (Heb 10:25).

therefore the very pattern exemplified by Jesus' suffering and inheritance of the promises.

With this in view, the logic of 10:37–39, with its allusion to Isa 26:20 and its citation of Hab 2:3–4, becomes clear. In the eschatological judgment and the return of Jesus those who have remained faithful will, like Jesus (though also because of Jesus), be judged pleasing to God. At that point they too will receive what God has promised them. That is to say, like Jesus, they will *live*. Rather than be destroyed, they will save their “souls” or ... perhaps better, their “lives” (ψυχή, 10:39). The transition to Heb 11 and the litany of faithful people living as those whose lives exemplify faithful anticipation of the reward of the promise of resurrection life and an eternal inheritance follows perfectly from this line of thought. Moreover, the fact that the list reaches its apex with Jesus, the chief example for the author of one who faithfully endured suffering when he endured the cross (12:2), supports the larger interpretation of Heb 10:36–39 for which I am arguing. By locating Jesus at the top of the list of saints whose life on earth attested their faith in the coming city, land, and resurrection, the author presents Jesus as the paradigmatic example of one who pleased God and received the promised life. Jesus is *the* primary illustration of the logic that underlies Heb 10:36–38.

When, therefore, the author combines the phrasing of Isa 26:20 with a reworked allusion to Hab 2:3–4, the hybrid “citation” effectively highlights the parousia of the Son and the promised reward of resurrection life that will be given to those faithfully awaiting the salvation he will bring them. In Heb 10 the author presents the Son as the one who did what no one else had done—lived with the Law written on his inner being. He was, in



other words, the one qualified to be the mediator of the promised new covenant in which all members would have the Law written on their hearts. The Son was also, though, the paradigmatic righteous sufferer. He who was without sin suffered even unto death. This confession is interpreted throughout Heb 10 in light of Ps 39 LXX, Isa 26:20 LXX, and Hab 2:3–4 LXX. The writer understands these texts to mean that the righteous sufferer pleases God more than the presentation of animal sacrifice. Such faithfulness results in a great reward (μισθαποδοσία, 10:35), the reception of the promise (κομίσησθε τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν), in short, *life* (10:38). Ultimately, when the one who in a little while is coming and will not delay actually arrives, the faithful will receive the resurrection. Jesus, again, is the model for this pattern.

All of this indicates that even in 10:5–10 the author has Jesus' resurrection in view just as much as Jesus' enduring the suffering of death. Those who follow in the way of Jesus—those who endure as Jesus endured—are therefore certain to receive the fullness of the God's promises, just as Jesus, their forerunner, has.

To be sure, more is going on here than a simple example of moral living. Jesus has done more than just provide an ethical pattern. He has made the new covenant offering, an offering that purifies his siblings and opens the way into the fullness of the promises in a way that the offerings of the first covenant never did. But the exemplary function of Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension into the eternal realm are no less important on account of the unique role the Son plays. Although Jesus is the Son, he is also a blood-and-flesh human being, made like his brothers in every way, yet without sin. Thus, Jesus, as the perfect righteous sufferer, is both the first one to live with

perfect faith and the first one to receive the promises. As such, he becomes *the* paradigm for all those who follow him. That means that just as Jesus now *lives*, so also those who endure and hold fast to their confession will *live*. Like those models about to be discussed in Heb 11, they too will inherit the unshakable realities.<sup>70</sup>

#### ***4.3.1.3 Summary: Jesus' Body in Heaven and the New Covenant Offering***

In the preceding discussion I argued that Jesus lived and died in such a way as to be qualified to be the mediator of the new covenant. The larger context of the homily, in which Jesus has been depicted as being without sin and as the righteous sufferer *par excellence*, informs the interpretation of the portions of Ps 40, Isa 26, and Hab 2 that the author has utilized. As the speaker of Ps 40, Christ is being portrayed as the one who has been redeemed from the pit. In the case of Jesus the full force of this language applies. He was not rescued from a situation *like* the pit of death. He was brought out of death. This salvation was granted to him because he is the one who lived the kind of life (i.e., a righteous life defined by having the Law internalized) that warranted resurrection. Jesus' resurrection therefore informs the logic of Heb 10.

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<sup>70</sup> An interesting parallel to this line of reasoning is found in *2 Bar* 54:17–21. Shortly after a possible allusion to Ps 40:5 (see *2 Bar* 54:11–12), the text speaks of humanity being like Adam and having the ability to choose right or wrong. Some choose sin and destruction, and some choose the glory of the coming age. Those in the latter group are depicted in 54:16 with language reminiscent of Hab 2:4—“For truly, the one who believes will receive reward” (A. F. J. Klijn, “2 [Syriac Apocalypse of] Baruch: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* [ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983], 1:615–52, here 640). The allusion continues in v. 21 which states, “For at the end of the world, a retribution will be demanded with regard to those who have done wickedly in accordance with their wickedness, and you will glorify the faithful ones in accordance with their faith” (Ibid.). The link between glorification and resurrection in *2 Baruch* (cf., e.g., 50:2–51:5; see my discussion in section 2.4.2.5) suggests that when the author of *2 Baruch* interprets Hab 2:4 in terms of the faithful being glorified, he understands the comment about the righteous one *living* in terms of that one receiving the eschatological resurrection.

That this is the case is further suggested by the parenetic thrust of the last portion of the chapter. Here the author draws upon language from Isa 26:20 (a text in which eschatological judgment and reward—specifically, resurrection—are predicated) and Hab 2:3–4 to exhort his auditors not to turn away in the midst of suffering. Jesus is the model for them. He endured his test faithfully and received the great reward. When he comes again he will bring the same reward—life—to those who have done God’s will (i.e., those who have faithfully endured in their confession of him).<sup>71</sup>

With this in mind, I now turn to address again the question of where Jesus’ body was offered to God. If the resurrection of Jesus’ human body informs the author’s argument in Heb 10, then it is plausible to think in terms of Jesus’ resurrected body being offered to God in heaven. The portion of Ps 40 which the author cites and the rest of the context of Heb 10 suggest that this offering ought not to be identified with the death of Jesus’ body on the cross. Four additional lines of evidence support this hypothesis.

First, Jesus’ death, while implicit in this context (it was the ultimate moment of suffering that he endured), is not explicitly equated with the offering of Jesus’ body. The text, in other words, does not demand that the offering be identified as Jesus’ death on the cross. The author simply states that Jesus’ body was offered. He does not clarify where. Given the implicit role of Jesus’ resurrection in the scriptural citations and the logic of the case, it is possible to suggest that the body offered to God was Jesus’ glorified body.

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<sup>71</sup> This logic is remarkably similar to the apocalyptic eschatology expressed in 4QpPs<sup>a</sup>, which speaks of the reward of the eternal inheritance coming to those who do God’s will—those who endure the period of testing in the last days (see section 2.4.2.1).

This presentation occurred in heaven when the resurrected Son entered into God's presence.

Second, I have already demonstrated in this study that Jesus assumes the throne at God's right hand because he is a human being, not a ministering *spirit* (Heb 1:7, 14). As has been noted, the argument of these opening chapters of Hebrews creates the presumption of Jesus' body being in heaven. When, in the context of the pattern of the righteous sufferer receiving resurrection life, the writer speaks of Jesus' body, this presumption further adds to the plausibility of this body being the resurrected body. That is, since Jesus' body is in heaven, it is not necessary to assume that the offering of Jesus' body to God must have taken place on earth. Such an offering could have been made in heaven.

Third, in the third chapter of this study I argued that the confession of Jesus' resurrection stands at the heart of the author's argument for why and where Jesus is qualified to serve as a high priest. As 8:4 says, on earth Jesus has no qualifications to serve as a priest and to present gifts and offerings to God. Having arisen into the kind of life typified by Melchizedek, however, he has the qualification he needs—indestructible life. Further, having ascended into heaven, he is in the one place where he can serve as high priest. Given these points, the possibility that Jesus' resurrected body is what is offered to God becomes a probability. If Jesus can serve as a high priest only after his resurrection and if he can only serve in the heavenly realms, then the offering of his body—as a high-priestly act that effects atonement—is most likely conceived of by the author as an offering made in heaven. Jesus' body was offered to God, in other words, in

the only place and at the only time after which Jesus was qualified to make such an offering—in heaven, after his resurrection.

Fourth, as noted, all of this aligns with the shift in Heb 10 from a discussion of what Jesus offered (see 8:3) to the parenthesis of the last half of the chapter. Even more telling, the logic of Jesus' resurrection as I have attempted to explain dovetails perfectly with the next portion of the homily: the litany of faithful ones in 11:1–12:2 who are witnesses for the audience of what it looks like to live as those who look forward to the “better resurrection.” These faithful ones will live, and Jesus is the chief example.

In sum, Heb 10:5–10 should be read in terms of the entire pattern of Jesus as the righteous sufferer who has received the supreme vindication. The Son's coming into the world clearly highlights the incarnation of this heavenly figure. A body was prepared for him and with that body he lived and died with perfect faith, without sin. As such, Jesus became the first one to receive the full and perfect inheritance of resurrected life. He was therefore able to take his body into heaven where it was presented before God.

The implications of this logic are crucial for understanding the author's argument. In his view, the significance of the incarnation continues *after* the suffering and death of Jesus. In addition to Heb 10:10, several interpreters point to 10:20 as further evidence that Jesus left his body (in 10:20 his “flesh”) behind as he ascended spiritually into heaven.<sup>72</sup> I address Heb 10:20 directly in section 4.3.4. For now I note that such a

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<sup>72</sup> E.g., Wilfried Eisele, *Ein unerschütterliches Reich: Die mittelplatonische Umformung des Parusiegedankens im Hebräerbrief* (BZNW 116; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), esp. 390–93; Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk*, 146–48; James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle*

conclusion runs counter to all the evidence so far compiled in this study. For the writer, Jesus arose bodily to the kind of life God had promised to his people. With this perfected humanity, he ascended into heaven. There the *body* of Jesus, the Christ,<sup>73</sup> was presented to God. To put it another way, Heb 10:5–10 expresses more fully the author’s statement in 9:24 that “Christ entered ... into heaven itself, now to *appear* in God’s presence on our behalf” (εἰσηλθεν ... Χριστὸς ... εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν, νῦν ἐμφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν). After making atonement by way of this offering, he sat down on the throne at God’s right hand. There he waits until his return to the world/κόσμος. When he comes back he will bring salvation, the better resurrection life God has promised, to all his followers. At that point the inheritance he obtained will be made available to all God’s people.

Jesus’ body, however, is not the only thing identified by the author as constituting Jesus’ offering. He also says that Jesus presented his blood and himself to God. I turn first to discuss the language of Jesus’ presenting his blood to God and then to the passages that speak of Jesus offering himself.

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*to the Hebrews* (CBQMS 13; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983), 107; Wedderburn, “Sawing Off the Branches,” 401.

<sup>73</sup> Some note the combination of the name Jesus and the title Christ here (see, e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 277). It occurs in Hebrews for the first time here. Most scholars comment on the fact that the collocation indicates the bringing together of the name for the lowly, suffering Son and the name applied to the exalted, reigning Son. If this is an appropriate deduction, then I would further point out that is the body of the one who has been named as both the suffering one and the exalted one. This further coheres with my argument that the offered body is not just that of Jesus, the suffering one, but also that of Christ, the exalted one. The exaltation, in other words, is included in the identification of the body offered. If the body is in heaven, this makes perfect sense. The resurrection makes it possible for the body of Jesus Christ to be offered/presented to God.

#### 4.3.2 *Jesus' Blood and Yom Kippur: Hebrews and Levitical Atonement*

In section 4.2 I highlighted points where the author of Hebrews envisions Jesus presenting his blood before God in heaven. If Jesus' high-priestly work is more than an extended metaphor in Hebrews, then the author's conceptions of sacrifice and the role and significance of blood are likely to differ from what is often assumed. In particular, the widely held notions that death stands at the center of the practice of animal sacrifice,<sup>74</sup> and that Jesus' death stands at the conceptual center of the author's understanding of atonement,<sup>75</sup> are hard to square with the homily's consistent emphasis on Jesus' presentation of his atoning offering before God in heaven.

In this section I argue that Hebrews applies the language of blood sacrifice to Jesus' high-priestly ministry, which accords with the account and function of blood offering one finds in Leviticus. This fits with the assumption of Jesus' glorified body (perfected/immortal humanity) ascending into heaven *and* with the consistent claims of the author that Jesus presented his offering in heaven. Of special note is the identification in Leviticus of blood with *life*. The proper offering—that is, presentation before God—of that blood/life as portrayed in Leviticus is a central element in the redemption and purification of both the people and the tabernacle. According to the evidence of Leviticus, a direct correlation holds between the willingness of the divine presence to

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<sup>74</sup> Several scholars have recently begun to challenge the traditional notion that sacrifice has death at its conceptual center. For a critique of this conception in the Hebrew Bible see esp. Christian A. Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer im Alten Testament: Die Signifikanz von Blut- und Verbrennungsriten im kultischen Rahmen* (WMANT 94; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002), esp. 187–221. A broader critique is offered in the comparative study of Kathryn McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence: A Comparative Study of Sacrifice* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), esp. 44–64.

<sup>75</sup> See esp. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 188, who refers to Jesus' atoning death/sacrifice as "the key event of the plot" in the story that underlies the homily.

abide with the people and the status of the purity of the people and the sanctuary. The account of blood sacrifice in Leviticus suggests that the application and presentation of the blood—i.e., the life—of the animal holds a central place in the rituals that make ongoing communion with God and the covenant people possible. The author of Hebrews, I argue, assumes a concept of blood offering that aligns well with the Levitical account.<sup>76</sup>

#### ***4.3.2.1 Blood Offering and Atonement in Leviticus***

A number of recent studies on sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible, and in Leviticus in particular,<sup>77</sup> point out that the efficacy of Levitical blood rituals lies *not* in the death of the animal whose blood is offered, but in the application of its blood—that is, its life (Lev 17:11), which is the offering—to the various implements of worship, and ultimately the presentation of that blood/life to God. The Levitical acts of blood application have two correlated goals: 1) to ransom for sin, and 2) to expunge or expiate impurities that threaten the people and God’s dwelling among them. I turn first to look briefly at the Levitical instructions for how to perform the main sacrifices involving blood. Such a survey demonstrates the biblical text’s relative lack of interest in the slaughter and death of the animal being offered. I look second at the related issues of blood, sin, and purity.

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<sup>76</sup> Others have argued that Jesus’ death was not the place or time of Jesus’ offering. By way of analogy with the Levitical account of sacrifice, Faustus Socinus, for example, suggested a distinction be made in Hebrews between the bloodletting and the presentation of the blood (see the summary of his position in Bruce Demarest, *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7, 1–10 from the Reformation to the Present* [BGBE 19; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1976], 22).

<sup>77</sup> E.g., Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), esp. 1031–35; Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer*; Ina Willi-Plein, *Opfer und Kult im alttestamentlichen Israel: Textbefragungen und Zwischenergebnisse* (SB 153; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1993); and Bernd Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen: Traditions- und religionsgeschichtliche Studien zur priesterschriftlichen Sühnetheologie* (WMANT 55; 2d ed.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000).



The five main offerings depicted in Leviticus are: the **עלה**, the “burnt/whole offering” detailed in Lev 1:1–17 and 6:8–13; the **מנחה**, the “grain/cereal offering” detailed in Lev 2:1–16 and 6:14–23; the **זבח שלמים**, the “peace/fellowship offering” detailed in Lev 3:1–17 and 7:11–36; the **חטאת**, the “purification/sin offering” detailed in Lev 4:1–5:13 and 6:24–30; and, the **אשם**, the “guilt offering” detailed in Lev 5:14–6:7 and 7:1–10.

Of these five it should be noted that the **מנחה** offering involves no slaughter or blood ritual at all. The other four do involve some blood manipulation, but when the slaughter of the animal is mentioned, only brief statements are made regarding how this happens. While birds are handled slightly differently, offerings from the flock or the herd typically involve the one who brings the offering laying a hand on its head and slaughtering (**שחט**) it. This instruction occurs with the various forms of the **עלה** in Lev 1:4–5, 11 (in v. 11 no reference is made to the laying on of hands; only the slaughter is mentioned); with instances of the **זבח שלמים** in Lev 3:2, 8, 13; and with the many permutations of the **חטאת** in Lev 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33. Additionally, some specifications are given regarding the locations for slaughtering the different kinds of sacrifices (see Lev 1:11; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 24, 29, 33; 6:25; 7:2). Notably, though, the method of the slaughter is never prescribed or depicted. The text simply assumes it.

By way of contrast, extensive instructions are provided regarding issues such as how the body of the animal is to be divided (e.g., Lev 1:6–9, 12–13), what may and may

not be kept or eaten (e.g., 3:16–17; 4:11–12, 19–21, 26, 31, 35; 7:3–6, 8, 22–36), when it must be eaten and by whom (e.g., 6:24–30; 7:6–10, 15–21, 29, 31), what parts must be burned and how they are to be handled (e.g., 1:9, 13; 3:3–5, 9–11, 14–16; 4:8–10, 19, 26, 31; 7:3–5, 31), and where, when, and how the blood is to be applied (e.g., 1:5, 11; 3:2, 8; 4:5–7, 16–18, 25, 30, 34). In sum, the details of the text focus substantially more attention on what happens *after* the slaughter of the animal than on the slaughter itself. Christian Eberhart’s thorough study of sacrifice in the Old Testament leads him to conclude that the emphasis in the text on all the ritual acts that occur after the killing “zeigt sich allerdings, dass die Tötung von Opfertieren zu den unwichtigeren Handlungen gehört.”<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps more importantly for the purposes of this study, when the offering effects atonement, the atoning result is never directly linked with the act of slaughtering the animal. It is, however, often correlated with the application of blood to various items in the tabernacle precinct. A full discussion and response to the most prominent general theories that view the role of death as a central element in animal sacrifice lies beyond the scope of this study. The evidence adduced above, however, already challenges such a notion. Moreover, as was noted above, a growing chorus of voices from the fields of sociology and biblical studies is calling into question theories that locate the focal point of animal sacrifice at the death of the victim.<sup>79</sup> Given the interest in Hebrews in blood

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<sup>78</sup> Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer*, 399; cf. William K. Gilders’ discussion of slaughter and the purification offering (*Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004], 122–23, 184–85).

<sup>79</sup> See n. 74.

offering and atonement, questions concerning the meaning of atonement in the biblical text and how blood relates to procuring it must be addressed.

In his recent study on the meaning of the verb כָּפַר Jay Sklar argues that in sacrificial contexts the verb carries both the sense of redemption/ransom and purification.<sup>80</sup> The tendency in scholarly discourse has been to isolate these meanings from one another by applying the senses of “ransom”/“redemption” or “atonement” primarily to sin contexts where the people risk the danger of divine punishment, and applying the sense of “purification” primarily to contexts—especially that of the מִטְמָא—where ritual impurities threaten the space where God dwells among the people.<sup>81</sup> Sklar, however, argues that “sin not only endangers, it also defiles, while impurity not only defiles, it also endangers.”<sup>82</sup>

To be sure, sin (i.e., moral impurity) and ritual impurity are different things.<sup>83</sup> Sin involves a transgression against God’s commands and risks a punitive response from

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<sup>80</sup> Jay Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions* (HBM 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), esp. 183–87.

<sup>81</sup> So, e.g., Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1079–84.

<sup>82</sup> Jay Sklar, “Sin and Impurity: Atoned or Purified? Yes!,” in *Perspectives on Purity and Purification in the Bible* (ed. Baruch J. Schwartz, et al; LHBOTS 474; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 18–31.

<sup>83</sup> See esp. the recent work of Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21–31. Klawans argues for a distinction between two kinds of impurity in ancient Israel—ritual and moral. The latter was more closely related to sin, while the former related to such natural events as birth and menstrual blood. He does not, however, pose a mutually exclusive dichotomy between the two. He notes, for example, that the same language of defilement is applied to sin and ritual impurity in the biblical text (22). The distinction between sin and impurity is now widely recognized (e.g., Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, 134; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel,” in *The Word of God Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* [ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O’Connor; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983], 399–414; and the immensely helpful discussion of impurity in E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* [London: SCM Press, 1990], 133, 137–51). Sklar is aware of these distinctions and of Klawans’ work in particular (*Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, 144–50). He basically accepts Klawans’

him. Some form of redemption is necessary to avert that response. Ritual impurity typically arises from perfectly normal and natural functions such as birth, sex, skin diseases, and contact with a corpse. There is no transgression or moral fault associated with the latter issues. These natural phenomena do, however, convey impurity to the sanctuary and, in some cases, require sacrifices for purification.<sup>84</sup>

While it may be obvious that sin invites divine wrath and requires “redemption,” Sklar notes that sin also confers impurity to the sinner, the land, and the sanctuary (e.g.,

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conclusions regarding ritual and moral impurity, but argues that Klawans has not paid enough attention to instances that call for qualification of his generalizations. Specifically, while Klawans argues for major moral impurities (sexual sins, idolatry, and bloodshed), Sklar adds that there are also major ritual impurities. He observes, “[T]he same ritual procedure (sacrifice) is prescribed for the cleansing of the ritual impurity that stems from a major impurity and for the moral impurity that stems from unintentional sin. This is not to imply that Klawans is incorrect in distinguishing between moral and ritual impurity; it is simply to clarify that there are similarities between the two realms of impurity that his more general breakdown does not identify” (149, emphasis original). Thus some ritual impurities appear to be more significant than others and require more than washing and time to be resolved. These major impurities also require sacrifice (see n. 84 below). Klawans mentions this in passing (*Impurity and Sin*, 26), but Sklar is right to point out that this fact does not play a significant role in Klawans’ general account of how ritual impurity is removed. Sklar also problematizes Klawans’ comments concerning the impossibility of a major moral impurity like bloodshed being purified. He notes that in Num 35:33 bloodshed does not lead to the permanent, moral defilement of the land. The blood of the one who shed blood is explicitly singled out as having the power to purify the land from the blood shed upon it (*Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, 148).

<sup>84</sup> Birth, for example, requires a blood offering (a lamb for an *עֹלָה* and a bird for a *חַטָּאת*; Lev 12:6; Sanders [*Jewish Law*, 143] refers to childbirth-impurity as requiring two stages for purification). The priest makes the offering before the LORD (Lev 12:7). In this way the priest atones (*כִּפֶּר*) for the woman (*עַל יְדֶיהָ*) and purifies her from her issue of blood (*וַיִּטְהַרְהָ מִמִּקְרַח דַּמְיָהּ*). Milgrom is probably correct to say that the atonement here concerns the altar, which has become ritually defiled by the woman’s issue of blood (*Leviticus 1–16*, 760). Thus the woman is not the object of atonement, rather atonement is made *on behalf of* *עַל* the woman. It should be noted, though, that the preposition *עַל* is also used of atonement for the sanctuary (e.g., Lev 16:16). Nonetheless, Lev 12:7 appears to suggest that the woman herself is also purified by the offering. Her own ritual impurity (from the blood of childbirth) is purified not only by the time she has waited (v. 6), but also by the offering. Notably too, she apparently cannot just wash as would be the case with menstruation. This seems to fit well with Sklar’s larger claims, and in particular with his qualification of Klawans’ generalizations. There are major ritual impurities that require blood offering for purification. The red heifer ceremony (Num 19:1–13) may also be noted here since the rite involves slaughter and blood manipulation, but concerns a ritual impurity—corpse impurity.

Lev 18:21–30; 20:3; Num 35:30–34).<sup>85</sup> As such, these sins produce impurity that can be purified by sacrifices (e.g., Lev 16:30, where Yom Kippur is the day that atonement is made [כִּפֹּר] for the people to purify [לְמַהֲרָם] them and they are purified before the LORD from all their *sins* [מִכָּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם]).<sup>86</sup>

In keeping with this thesis, Sklar adds that the purification of the sanctuary by way of the חַטֹּאת (e.g., Lev 16:16, 19, 33) likely implies that the sanctuary has become impure on account of sin *just as much as* on account of the people’s ritual impurities being transmitted to it. That is to say, if the ritual impurity of the people results in the impurity of the sanctuary (e.g., Num 19:13, 20); and if at least some sin contributes to the impurity of the sancta, then the purification of the sanctuary by way of sacrifice is a purification that deals with *both* sin and ritual impurity. This is especially clear in Lev 16:16, where blood manipulation by Aaron atones both for ritual impurities and for sins.

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<sup>85</sup> Moral impurity is not contagious, but it does defile the sinner, the land, and the sanctuary (so Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 26–30; cf. Jacob Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary: The Priestly ‘Picture of Dorian Gray,’” *RB* 83 [1976]: 390–99).

<sup>86</sup> In keeping with his larger project Milgrom comments on Lev 16:30, “The purgation rites in the sanctuary purify the sanctuary, not the people” (*Leviticus 1–16*, 1056). He goes on to add, “Yet as the sanctuary is polluted by the people’s impurities, their elimination, *in effect*, also purifies the people” (Ibid., emphasis added). He suggests that the scapegoat ritual may be the implied means of the people’s purification (which seems reasonable). In any case, the “metaphoric use” of מַהֲרָם here “is another sign of the authorship of H” (Ibid.). The apparent glitch in Milgrom’s account of the way atonement functioned and the object that is atoned for/purified in P may be telling. Here the people are purified, not the sanctuary, and the purification concerns sin/חַטֹּאת, “the all inclusive term for wrongdoing (found in vv 16 and 21), which therefore combines both the pollution of the sanctuary and the iniquities of the people” (Ibid.). Whatever the actual views of the original sources, as it stands Lev 16:30 appears to say that the Day of Atonement purifies the people from their sins. As concerns Hebrews, it is worth noting that the LXX (assuming something like Rahlfs) is especially clear on this point. Because the LXX attests a different division of the clauses here than the MT, for someone reading the passage in Greek there would be no question that the atonement of Yom Kippur is for the purpose of purifying the people from all their sins before the LORD and, as a result, the people will be purified (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτῃ ἐξιλάσεται περὶ ὑμῶν καθαρῖσαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν ἔναντι κυρίου καὶ καθιρῶσθε).

The verse reads, “Thus he shall make atonement [כִּפֹּר] for the sanctuary, because of the uncleannesses of [מִטְמְאוֹתַי] the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions [וּמִפְשְׁעֵיהֶם], all their sins [לְכָל־חַטָּאתָם]; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which remains with them in the midst of their uncleannesses” (NRSV). The statement “all their sins” might modify only the transgressions, but it more likely groups the moral transgressions and the impurities, which as Milgrom points out, is inclusive of ritual impurities,<sup>87</sup> together under the rubric of חַטָּאת.<sup>88</sup>

The case of inadvertent sin by the anointed priest<sup>89</sup> in Lev 4 also fits this pattern. When the חַטָּאת for the anointed priest’s sin—a sin which endangers/conveys guilt to all the people (Lev 4:3)<sup>90</sup>—is performed, that priest must enter the tabernacle and apply blood to the curtain before the inner sanctum and to the horns of the altar of incense in the outer sanctum (Lev 4:6–7). This requirement of blood application in the tabernacle suggests that the anointed priest’s sin communicated impurity to the altar that stands within the outer sanctum.<sup>91</sup> Sin has rendered at least one of the two sancta impure. Since guilt comes upon all the people because of this sin, the clear implication is that the anointed priest’s sin and the resulting impurity bring the entire congregation into danger.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 1033.

<sup>88</sup> Milgrom argues that “all their sins” is, “A catchall phrase that incorporates all the wrongs except for ... the brazen sins. ... The importance of this phrase is that it emphasizes that not only do physical impurities [i.e., ritual impurities] pollute the sanctuary but so do Israel’s sins—all of them” (Ibid., 1034). By the same token, the blood rites on Yom Kippur purify the sancta from both ritual and moral impurities.

<sup>89</sup> According to Milgrom, the language of “anointed priest” is preexilic terminology for the high priest (Ibid., 231).

<sup>90</sup> This actually puts the people in danger (Ibid., 231–32).

<sup>91</sup> So Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary,” 393.

The purification of the outer sanctum (including the veil before the inner sanctum) by means of blood application rectifies the situation. That applying blood to the horns of the altar of incense is, at points, explicitly linked with purifying the altar (Lev 8:15; 16:18–19), serves to corroborate the conclusion that the act of applying blood on account of the anointed priest's inadvertent sin implies a direct link between sin and purification. This is instructive since it appears that the sin of the anointed priest *both* endangers the community *and* defiles the outer sanctum. The application of blood within the first sanctum is, therefore, a central act that remedies the situation—it averts the danger of a punitive response from God *and* purifies the outer sanctum.

Furthermore, while the people's ritual impurities render the sancta impure, they also put the people themselves in danger (e.g., Lev 22:2–9, 15–16). Those who are ritually impure defile the sanctuary in a way similar to the inadvertent sin of the anointed priest. So at least some ritual impurities appear to put the people in the same position with respect to the sanctuary as the sin of the anointed priest does.<sup>92</sup> Like the inadvertent sinner, they too require both ransom and purification. Thus, given that the possibility of divine judgment coming upon the people is also correlated in certain circumstances with ritual impurity, it makes sense, Sklar argues, that the action of כִּפָּר represents an action that provides redemption—the removal of the danger of divine retribution—as much as it effects purification.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, 139.

<sup>93</sup> Sklar nicely summarizes the point when he notes that while sin and ritual impurity start from different points (sin is moral transgression, ritual impurity comes from nonmoral activities), both inadvertent sin and

The validity of this thesis is confirmed by other evidence in the Pentateuch that blood, the agent whose application and manipulation is often closely linked with atonement, has the power *both* to redeem and to purify. Passages like Lev 8:15 and 16:18–19 highlight the purifying power of blood. In the former text the outer altar of burnt offering is initially purified (קָדַשׁ) and consecrated (קָדַשׁ) by the application of blood to the horns of the altar and the pouring out of blood around the base of the altar. This atones (כִּפֶּר) for the altar. In the latter example the blood application on Yom Kippur purifies (טָהַר) the altar from the impurities of the people.

Blood also has the power to effect ransom (כִּפֶּר). This is especially evident in Lev 17:11.<sup>94</sup> The prohibition in Lev 17:10 regarding the consumption of blood has as its rationale the assertion in 17:11 that the life (נֶפֶשׁ) of an animal is in its blood. In the Pentateuch blood and life are at points equated (cf. 17:14; Gen 9:4; Deut 12:23–25).<sup>95</sup> Thus, when in 17:11 blood is said to be given by God to make atonement (לְכַפֵּר) for the lives of the people (נַפְשֵׁי יִכְחֵם), the primary principle is that of ransom—a life is given in place of other lives. Or, to use the language of the verse, the *blood* is given upon the altar

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major impurity are dealt with in the same way. In his words, “When the ending point of sin and impurity are compared ... the spheres overlap: the unintentional sinner and person suffering a major impurity need to effect both [ransom] and purgation” (ibid., 157).

<sup>94</sup> This is widely recognized. See, e.g., Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 707–8.

<sup>95</sup> See Rolf Rendtorff, “Another Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. David P. Wright, et al; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 23–28, esp. 23–26; Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, 18–25.



to atone/לְכַפֵּר for the lives of the people. Sklar concludes, “[I]t is clear that the atoning function of the blood is grounded in its relation to the life of the animal, that is, *the blood is able to atone because of the life it contains*.”<sup>96</sup>

The evidence adduced by Sklar suggests that both sin and ritual impurity require, at least in some instances, both ransom and purification. In keeping with this thesis, the biblical evidence suggests that blood carries the power both to redeem and to purify. In particular contexts, one side of this duality may be emphasized over the other, but the two should not be abstracted from each other. Both moral and ritual impurity can ultimately produce the same detrimental effects with respect to God. As Sklar states, “[T]he end point of sin and impurity is the same: both endanger (requiring ransom) and both pollute (requiring purgation). As a result, it is not simply כַּפֵּר that is needed in some instances and purgation that is needed in others, but כַּפֵּר-purgation that is needed in both.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, 173, emphasis original. It should be noted that there is considerable debate about whether Lev 17:11 is a general statement about the effect of blood in sacrifice, or if the context and theology of P limits the verse to the peace offerings. Jacob Milgrom has argued for the latter view (“A Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11,” *JBL* 90 [1971]: 149–56; see also his *Leviticus 1–16*, 707–9). Many commentators, however, conclude that the verse relates a general principle—the life in blood is what has the power to atone (see, e.g., Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer*, 259–61, 288; Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, 22, 168–76, who argues from a diachronic perspective that Lev 17:11 is a late, secondary interpretation of blood manipulation by H and the only place where ransom is part of sacrificial blood manipulation, but notes nevertheless that from a synchronic perspective some texts [e.g., Exod 30:10] may be helpfully explained—so long as one does not assume blood manipulation is a univalent act; Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen*, 242–47; Rendtorff, “Another Prolegomenon,” esp. 27; Baruch J. Schwartz, “The Prohibitions Concerning the ‘Eating’ of Blood in Leviticus 17,” in *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel* [ed. Gary A. Anderson and Saul M. Olyan; JSOTSup 125; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991], 34–66, here 47; and Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, 178–81). That some Jews during the Second Temple period took the prohibition on eating blood as indicative of a general principle that blood is life and that blood is reserved for atonement is suggested by the concern for this prohibition in *Jubilees* (see William K. Gilders, “Blood and Covenant: Interpretive Elaboration on Genesis 9.4–6 in the Book of *Jubilees*,” *JSP* 15 (2006): 83–118). I discuss the role of blood in *Jubilees* in more detail below.

<sup>97</sup> Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, 182.

Atonement, in other words, is a “purifying ransom” and a “ransoming purgation”<sup>98</sup> effected by the application and manipulation of blood/life that has both redeeming and purifying properties. This further highlights the fact that blood/life stands at the center of the process that results in atonement, since the life in the blood is the agent that has the power to redeem and purify.<sup>99</sup> Because blood has these properties, blood offering both ameliorates the punitive danger the people face *and* enables the divine presence to continue to dwell among the people in the tabernacle’s inner sanctum. Sklar does little to address this latter point, but it has been argued especially clearly by Jacob Milgrom.

It should be noted that Milgrom, and others, would more sharply distinguish between the effects of sin and ritual purity and would disagree with elements of Sklar’s larger thesis.<sup>100</sup> I find Sklar’s argument persuasive at the synchronic level, which reads the Pentateuch as a unified document. As I note below, Hebrews uses the language of sin, impurity, redemption, and forgiveness in ways that do not suggest a sharp divide between sin and ritual impurity. This is unsurprising since the author of Hebrews would have read the Pentateuch synchronically. Moreover, the virtual conflation of purification and redemption language in Hebrews is not without analogy in the Second Temple period.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 182. Gilders synchronic or “gap filling” interpretation of Exod 30:10 reaches a similar, though more limited, conclusion (*Blood Ritual*, 176–80).

<sup>99</sup> See also Rendtorff, “Another Prolegomenon,” esp 27–28 where he argues for emphasis on the blood as the center of the offering, not on the rest of the process of sacrifice. Similarly, Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen*, 247.

<sup>100</sup> Milgrom would agree with Sklar that there are contexts where כִּפָּר can bear the sense of redeem/ransom. He plainly states, however, that, “This *kippēr* must be sharply distinguished from that of the sanctuary. In the latter instance, the impurities are purged to keep them from provoking the indwelling God to leave. In the ransom cases, however, *kippēr* has the immediate goal of preventing the divine anger from incinerating the innocent and guilty alike” (*Leviticus 1–16*, 1083). Moreover, he consistently argues that the כִּפָּר never purifies the offerer, but only the sancta and its appurtenances (see, e.g., “Israel’s Sanctuary,” 391).

Similar conflations of sin and ritual impurity can be found at Qumran.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the helpful findings of scholars such as Milgrom and Klawans with respect to purity and the willingness of the divine presence to dwell with humanity can be seen to supplement, rather than oppose, Sklar's work. In particular, the concerns of both scholars help explain the contours of the logic of atonement in Hebrews.

Milgrom has shown that in the Priestly theology, both in comparison to and in contrast with other ANE religious views, impurity threatens the ongoing presence of God among the people.<sup>102</sup> "Humans," he states, "can drive God out of the sanctuary by polluting it with their moral and ritual sins."<sup>103</sup> He goes on to argue that the various forms of impurity that arise from natural causes (contact with corpses, scale disease, and genital discharge—ritual impurities) have death as their "common denominator."<sup>104</sup> In his words,

Genital discharge from the male is semen and from the female, blood. They represent the life force; their loss represents death. ... The case of scale disease also becomes comprehensible with the realization that the Priestly legists have not focused on disease per se but only on the *appearance* of disease. Moldy fabrics and fungous houses ... are singled out not because they are struck with scale disease but because they give that appearance. So too the few varieties of scale

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<sup>101</sup> This is significant since even Klawans allows that the Qumran literature indicates that at least some Second Temple era Jews conflated sin with ritual impurity (*Impurity and Sin*, 67–91).

<sup>102</sup> The contrast consists primarily in the shift from demonic forces driving deities away in other ANE religions to human activity, particularly matters that result in impurity, being the force that can drive the one God away (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 42–47; see also his, "Israel's Sanctuary," esp. 392–93). Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice and the Temple*, 68–73, 92–93, agrees but limits this threat to God's presence primarily to heinous sins that cause permanent moral impurity. Ritual impurity does threaten the sanctuary in some way, but it does not appear in Klawans' view to have the same repelling force as sin (56), nor does it defile the land and the people in the same way (71), probably because it is impermanent and can be easily rectified. The primary threat in the case of ritual impurity falls upon those who approach the sanctuary or handle pure things in an impure state. They risk God's wrath. Notably, then, issues of ritual purity have much to do with preparing for the process of sacrifice. They are prerequisites that make those who will enter into God's presence fit to do so. In particular, the priests had to become like the angels and like God (pure and holy) in order to enter into the sancta (56–58).

<sup>103</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 43.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

disease afflicting the human body: their appearance is that of approaching death. . . . The wasting of the body, the common characteristics of the highly visible, biblically impure scale diseases, symbolizes the death process as much as the loss of vaginal blood and semen.<sup>105</sup>

This observation is all the more significant when one realizes that the antonym to impurity is holiness. Thus, Milgrom concludes that “holiness stands for life.”<sup>106</sup> The actions that render impurities pure are those related to the battle between the forces of death and life.

Within such a complex, the presentation and manipulation of blood/life before God, which is the primary means of rendering the sancta pure, participate in the battle between life and death. The purification of the sanctuary is “another victory of life over death.”<sup>107</sup> The need for the sancta to be purified results from the fact that the impurity-death of the people is conveyed to the sancta (e.g., Lev 15:31; 20:3; cf. Num 5:2; 19:13, 20; see also Lev 16:16 where the sanctuary is atoned from the impurities of the people). Impurity “is the implacable foe of holiness wherever it exists; it assaults the sacred realm even from afar.”<sup>108</sup> Milgrom goes on to suggest that “sin may not leave its mark on the face of the sinner, but it is certain to mark the face of the sanctuary, and unless it is quickly expunged, God’s presence will depart.”<sup>109</sup> The means for maintaining the purity of the sancta was especially the **דָּם** blood.<sup>110</sup> Milgrom comments at another point, “Blood . . . as life is what purges the sanctuary. It nullifies, overpowers, and absorbs the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 46, 1002–3.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 46–47.

<sup>108</sup> Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary,” 393.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 398.

<sup>110</sup> Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 254–58.

Israelites' impurities that adhere to the sanctuary, thereby allowing the divine presence to remain and Israel to survive."<sup>111</sup>

Along these lines it should be noted that very similar theological commitments are sometimes employed to explain the destruction of Solomon's temple (Milgrom notes, e.g., Ezek 5:11; 11:22–25, where the glory of the Lord departs from the temple; cf. Ezek 24:6–14; 36:16–18).<sup>112</sup> Judah is exiled because God can no longer stand to dwell among the people's impurities.<sup>113</sup>

The preceding discussion on the role and power of blood, particularly insofar as blood's life force can overcome the impurifying force of death, suggests that blood offering, especially that of the **זָבַח**, has to do with enabling the divine presence and the human being to come together in close proximity because it deals with the interrelated problems of sin, impurity, and mortality.<sup>114</sup> The mortality and sin of the human must first be addressed before the human can draw near to the divine presence and to ensure that the divine presence continues to dwell amongst the people. William Gilders rightly cautions that with respect to blood rituals and atonement in the Pentateuch, "We are told far more about what to do than about why it is done."<sup>115</sup> Attempts to unpack the internal

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 711–12.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>113</sup> These are moral impurities in particular. This logic may also be seen in the explanation of some rabbinic texts and by some of the early followers of Jesus regarding the significance of bloodshed for the destruction of the second temple (see, e.g., David M. Moffitt, "Righteous Bloodshed, Matthew's Passion Narrative and the Temple's Destruction: Lamentations as a Matthean Intertext," *JBL* 125 [2006]: 299–320).

<sup>114</sup> See Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, 117, 124.

<sup>115</sup> William K. Gilders, "Blood as Purificant in Priestly Torah: What Do We Know and How Do We Know it?," in *Perspectives on Purity and Purification in the Bible* (LHBOTS 474; ed. Baruch Schwartz, et al; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 77–83.

logic of blood sacrifice are, Gilders admonishes, always speculative attempts to create conceptual fillers for the gaps in the accounts from different sources that are combined in the text we have.<sup>116</sup> In particular, while the Priestly material equates blood with life, this source never “explicitly explains the purifying effect of blood manipulation with reference to blood’s identification with life.”<sup>117</sup> Only the H material makes that link. The *process* of sacrifice, in other words, should not be ignored. Blood application may be a central condition for atonement, but more elements than just blood application are in play, particularly in the P source.<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, the works of Milgrom and Sklar,<sup>119</sup> when read as mutually informative, provide a helpful assessment of the role and function of blood sacrifice in the Levitical system as portrayed synchronically in the Pentateuch. Whatever the pros and cons regarding the accuracy of Sklar’s explanation of the positions of the various Pentateuchal sources and historical practices attested in the final form of the

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Similarly, see Eberhart who argues that the conceptual center of sacrifice is not blood application but burning (*Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer*, esp. 399–401). Gilders also highlights the importance of burning (*Blood Ritual*, 138, 140). It should be noted, however, that he still maintains that blood is central, particularly in the purification offering context. Only blood enters the sancta. The blood, in other words, is the agent that effects atonement in and for the sancta. He points out, though, that even the application of blood itself must be performed “before Yahweh.” That is to say, “whatever the exact quality of the action-effect [of blood manipulation], and whatever the actual mechanism by which it is achieved, it seems likely that Yahweh is directly implicated in its realization. It is not the mere act of blood manipulation that is related to the action-effect *kipper*; it is blood manipulation ‘before Yahweh’” (136; cf. 140).

<sup>119</sup> I am not trying to present Milgrom and Sklar as in full agreement. They do not agree, particularly as concerns their understandings of the meaning of *כִּפֵּר* and of the significance of Lev 17:11 (see n. 96 and n. 100). I have, however, attempted to provide a synthetic reading of these two scholars that highlights the strengths of their respective contributions to a more synchronic understanding of the goal and effect of blood offering in the Pentateuch.

Pentateuch,<sup>120</sup> it is remarkable to note that the author of Hebrews seems to work with a notion of atonement very similar to the one Sklar deduces in his synchronic study of the Pentateuch. Hebrews, that is, uses both the language of redemption (λύτρωσις, 9:12; ἀπολύτρωσις, 9:15) and of purification (καθαρίζω and cognates, 1:3; 9:13–14, 22–23; 10:2).<sup>121</sup> Correlated with these terms are the words for or related to forgiveness (ἄφεσις, 9:22; 10:18; ἀθέτησις, 9:26; ἀφαιρέω, 10:4; περιαιρέω, 10:11) and forms of the verb “to sanctify” (ἀγιάζω, 2:11; 9:13; 10:10, 14, 29; 13:12). As Sklar’s hypothesis in particular would suggest, all four terms—redemption, forgiveness, purification, and sanctification—are closely collocated in Hebrews with the function and effect of sacrificial blood (e.g., 9:12–14, 18–22; 10:29; 13:12).<sup>122</sup> The significance of the larger process of sacrifice, which includes the victim’s slaughter, should not be completely abstracted from the acts of offering and manipulating the blood. Nonetheless, in keeping with the findings just presented, *the emphasis in Hebrews* lies on the presentation (προσφέρειν) of Jesus’ blood before God. The act of bringing the blood into God’s presence is, in keeping with one of the central emphases in Leviticus, the central act that effects both ransom (λύτρωσις) and purification (καθαρισμός).

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<sup>120</sup> Gilders, who agrees with Milgrom and Israel Knohl that H is later than P, admits as much when he states, “[I]f we adopt the standpoint of H tradents, who apparently expected that their interpretation of the P stratum would be accepted by the readers of the edited whole, we must consider how Lev 17:11 might be applied to P. ... [I]t is quite possible to apply Lev 17:11 to texts that represent blood manipulation activity, and which could be explained without reference to the verse” (*Blood Ritual*, 179).

<sup>121</sup> See also the uses of ἀφαιρέω (10:4) and περιαιρέω (10:11), terms that in their contexts seem synonymous with the purification language of 10:2 (cf. ἀθέτησις in 9:26).

<sup>122</sup> Such collocations are hardly limited to Hebrews. Other early Christian texts also closely correlate these or similar terms (e.g., Titus 2:14; 1 John 1:7, 9).

The centrality of blood offering in the process of sacrifice is, it should be noted, also highlighted in certain Second Temple Jewish texts. Column 16 lines 14–15 and column 26 lines 6–7 of the *Temple Scroll*, for example, both suggest that the חטאת blood of consecration and when offered on Yom Kippur is central for atonement. In 16:14–15 a bull is offered for the people as part of the annual consecration following the New Year’s festival.<sup>123</sup> The bull is said to be used by the priest to atone (וַיִּכַּפֵּר בּוֹ). The elements that are specifically identified are its blood and its fat (בְּדָמּוֹ וּבַחֲלֵבּוֹ). The act of manipulating the blood and the act of burning the fat are both depicted as the activities that make atonement. Moreover, in 26:6–7 the Yom Kippur offering of the blood of the goat (דָּמוֹ) offered for the people is singled out as the atoning agent. The high priest takes the blood of the goat and treats it as he did the blood of the bull offered on his own behalf. Thus he atones *with it* (וַיִּכַּפֵּר בּוֹ) for all the people of the assembly (עַל כּוֹל) (עִם לַקְהָל). The rest of the goat is burned and, as a result of this חטאת (16:9) offering, the people are forgiven (וַיִּסְלַח לַהֲמָה, 16:10).

The blood—i.e., the life—holds pride of place in the process of sacrifice. Gilders himself has pointed out that the place of the blood-as-life equation in the sacrificial system forms one of the central foci of *Jubilees*.<sup>124</sup> Specifically, he argues that the identification of blood with life has contributed in *Jubilees* to the prohibition on eating

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<sup>123</sup> So Johann Maier, *The Temple Scroll: An Introduction, Translation & Commentary* (JSOTSup 34; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 77–78.

<sup>124</sup> Gilders, “Blood and Covenant,” 83–118.



blood because the blood-as-life equation isolates the unique purgative role that blood plays in the sacrificial system. The rationale for the prohibition on consuming blood in *Jubilees* is that the blood/life of the animal is the agent that makes atonement. This sacred quality and function of blood place it off limits for human consumption.

Hebrews' own emphasis on the offering of blood in order to make atonement makes good sense in view of this larger Levitical and Second Temple context.<sup>125</sup> While the author draws upon various biblical sacrificial rituals,<sup>126</sup> his own emphasis on the blood offering of Yom Kippur warrants a more narrow focus on that annual atoning offering. Particularly interesting here are the themes, raised above by Milgrom, of blood/life and impurity/death and the importance of blood for bringing God and humanity into close proximity. Thus I turn to discuss the role of blood and Yom Kippur, especially as presented in Hebrews.

#### ***4.3.2.2 Blood Offering and Yom Kippur***

I noted in chapter one of this study the tendency to correlate the supposed loci of Yom Kippur (slaughter and presentation) with the humiliation/death and exaltation of Jesus in Hebrews. The preceding discussion already suggests that, in Leviticus at least,

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<sup>125</sup> Even in some of the literature of early Judaism it is clear that the presentation of the blood is the central moment in the sacrifice. In *Sipre* 128, for example, the slaughter of the Passover lamb is identified as a  $\text{קָרְבָּן}$  because, in the case of that slaughter, the blood is presented to God. Apart from that presentation, the slaughter is just a slaughter, not part of the performance of a  $\text{קָרְבָּן}$ . Additionally, *Sipre* 129 identifies the manipulation of the blood as indispensable for atonement, while, surprisingly, the burning of the fat is determined to be dispensable.

<sup>126</sup> E.g., the Tamid offerings are referenced (Heb 7:27). The author alludes to the peace offerings at the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant (Heb 9:19–20; cf. Exod 24:5–8) and the red heifer ritual (Heb 9:19). Yom Kippur is clearly in view (e.g., Heb 9:7). The comment about eating from the altar (13:10) is indicative of sacrifices other than the  $\text{זֶבַח}$ /Yom Kippur (which, as the author knows, are completely burned, not eaten; cf. 13:11).

the slaughter of the victim was not of central significance in the process of blood offering. The death of the animal is the central moment, nor is death highlighted in connection with the element that effects atonement. The blood/life of the animal is usually the agent that atones—i.e., it both redeems and purifies. Moreover, the focal point in the sacrificial process appears to consist more in the presentation and manipulation of the blood/life before God than in any other part of the process.

These same activities and conceptions of blood apply to the Yom Kippur rituals, among which the **זָבַח** offerings hold a central position. As noted above, some recent scholarship on Levitical sacrifice has demonstrated that it is often the blood/life of the sacrifice that is identified as effecting atonement.<sup>127</sup> The converse of this point is that in and of itself *the death or slaughter of the victim, while necessary to procure the blood/life that is offered, has no particular atoning significance.*<sup>128</sup> Thus, it is generally *the ritual manipulation of the blood* that results in the redemption and purgation both of those things to which that blood is applied, and for those people on whose behalf it is offered.<sup>129</sup> The blood must be brought into God's presence and come into contact with the appurtenances of the tabernacle in need of ritual purification in order for atonement to be made.

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<sup>127</sup> See n. 96.

<sup>128</sup> Ina Willi-Plein, "Some Remarks on Hebrews from the Viewpoint of Old Testament Exegesis," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BINS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 25–36, here 33; Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer*, 203–4; Idem, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors in Hebrews," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BINS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 37–64, here 39–44, 49.

<sup>129</sup> See Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, esp. 181–82.

On Yom Kippur, this application and presentation occurred in the course of the high priest's manipulation of the blood of the **זבחים** sacrifices (those of a bull and a goat) offered on that day. Particular focus rests on the annual entrance into the holy of holies where first the blood of the bull was sprinkled on the mercy seat, and then the blood of the goat was sprinkled before the mercy seat. As the discussion above has highlighted, ensuring the achievement of atonement was of paramount importance because the resulting purity and forgiveness enabled Israel to dwell near the presence of God in relative safety, *and* enabled God's presence/glory to dwell among the people for another year.<sup>130</sup> Thus, if there is any focal point of Yom Kippur, it is the manipulation and presentation of the blood.<sup>131</sup> The blood had to make it all the way into the inner sanctum. The presentation of the blood/life of the offerings before God's presence in the holy of holies and the application of their blood/life to the space of the inner sanctum and to the inner and outer altars is, therefore, the center of the process of the Yom Kippur sacrifices, not simply the slaughter of the animals.

In keeping with this analysis, Christian Eberhart comments that, as with the other blood offerings, "sacrificial blood purifies on physical contact, which means when it is

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<sup>130</sup> Willi-Plein, "Some Remarks on Hebrews," 33.

<sup>131</sup> In the context of Leviticus, the rite of the scapegoat also played an important role. The rite continued in to be an important part of the Yom Kippur rituals during the Second Temple period and was remembered in the literature of early Judaism (see *m. Yoma* 6). Given the emphasis on blood in Hebrews and the total lack of reference to the goat for Azazel, I will not consider that rite in this study. For a discussion of how the rite may have impacted Jewish apocalypticism and the notion of a heavenly high priesthood see Daniel Stökl, "Yom Kippur in the Apocalyptic *Imaginaire* and the Roots of Jesus' High Priesthood: Yom Kippur in Zechariah 3, 1 Enoch 10, 11QMelkizedeq, Hebrews and the Apocalypse of Abraham 13," in *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions* (ed. Jan Assmann and Guy G. Stroumsa; SHR 83; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 349–66.

actually applied to people or the sanctuary and its sacred objects. But this purification would not happen if the animal ... were to be slaughtered without the subsequent blood application rite being carried out.”<sup>132</sup> This finding implies that, contrary to the assumption of many New Testament exegetes of Hebrews, the Levitical account of Yom Kippur does not assume two great moments. To quote Eberhart again, “The moment of slaughter as such ... has no particular significance.”<sup>133</sup> Rather, the critical activity was the presentation of the life of the victim—that is, its blood—in the holy of holies and the application of that blood to the spaces of the sancta and to the altars.

This conclusion does not by itself mean that the author of Hebrews could not have conceived of Yom Kippur as having two great moments. One might object that the prominence of Jesus’ death in the tradition has led the writer to place more emphasis on the slaughter than is found in Leviticus. If, however, we assume for the moment that the author of Hebrews understood Yom Kippur along the lines just discussed—that the blood is the life and that the presentation and manipulation of that blood/life in the holy of holies is the central point for atonement on Yom Kippur—then a remarkable conclusion follows: the writer is unlikely to have conflated Jesus’ atoning work with his death at the crucifixion. The Levitical description of blood offering described above allows for the possibility that the author of Hebrews could reflect on the cross without that event necessarily functioning as a synecdoche for Jesus’ offering. Rather, an expansion or parsing out of the moments in the process, and in particular, an emphasis on the moment

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<sup>132</sup> Eberhart, “Characteristics,” 58.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

of presentation as the point at which atonement occurs, would allow him to do exactly what he has done—*stress the presentation of the blood of Jesus before God in the heavenly holy of holies*. Moreover, such an approach would further suggest that he could think of the presentation of this blood without appealing to that blood as a metaphor for Jesus' death.

As a side note, it seems on the whole unlikely that a Jewish author concerned with the subjects of sacrifice and purity would think of anyone bringing blood into God's presence in terms of bringing the impurity of death into God's presence and presenting it before him. Rather than Jesus' blood symbolizing his death in Hebrews, it seems more probable that, insofar as Jesus' blood functions as a symbol in the homily, Jesus' blood represents Jesus' life/living presence being present to God.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> I note here that even commentators who think of blood as a reference to Jesus' death try to understand this in terms of Jesus offering his life. Attridge, for example, argues of Heb 9:12 that Jesus' blood is his life offered in his sacrificial death. He writes, "At this point it is important to remember one basic feature of the 'blood' in the Yom Kippur ritual, namely, its uniting of the death of the sacrificial victim outside the inner sanctuary and the atoning action that takes place within. The metaphorical equivalent, Christ's blood, will do the same thing" (Hebrews, 248). Here, then, the assumption that Yom Kippur has two great moments continues to drive the logic of how Jesus' blood functions metaphorically. The real point is the death of Jesus, though in the Yom Kippur/high-priestly metaphor, the bloody death can be fused with the idea of atoning presentation, the second great moment at Yom Kippur. Thus, even though the Yom Kippur typology has two moments (and Attridge admits that it is not impossible that second moment/presentation might be thought of as in some way distinct from Jesus' death), the way the author uses this imagery to interpret Jesus' death explains why, in Attridge's view, "[T]he sharp distinction between death and offering that this image [i.e., the two moment typology of Yom Kippur] conveys will not be sustained as the exposition develops and the analogy is not pressed" (Ibid., 251). There are, however, some interpreters who have anticipated significant elements of the the reading offered in this study. For example, Walter Edward Brooks, "The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBL* 89 (1970): 205–14 highlights the importance of Jesus' blood being offered as an event that happens in heaven after the crucifixion and is likely to be conceived of in Hebrews as the presentation of Jesus' resurrection life (see esp. 208–14). Notably, and in contrast with this study, Brooks thinks Alexandrian and Philonic cosmology makes the concepts of the argument work (cf. 207 n. 14, 211). Thus for Brooks, blood language in Hebrews is apparently *only* a metaphor for Jesus' enduring life, not part of the constitution of that resurrection life (cf. 212).

Several important elements already discussed in this study converge with this hypothesis to corroborate its validity. In particular, this hypothesis both dovetails with the presence and role of Jesus' bodily resurrection in Hebrews as suggested in this study and explains (without explaining away) the author's consistent emphasis on heaven as the location of Jesus' offering. Four specific observations illustrate these points.

First, the supposition that the author thinks of the offering of Jesus' blood as the presentation of his life before God can be seen to align with his statement in 8:3–4. There he claimed that if Jesus were on earth, he would not be able to make any offering or serve in any kind of priestly capacity, because on earth those who offer the gifts according to the Law already exist. If the writer is serious here, then it is unlikely that he thinks either of the cross as the place of Jesus' offering or of the bloody death of Jesus as the sacrifice that was offered. Instead, as he goes on to say, Jesus' offering was presented to God in heaven, the very place where he can serve as a priest. It is often thought to be a mistake to push the writer's metaphor for coherence at this point.<sup>135</sup> But, if the author thinks of Jesus' blood in terms of his life, and if he confesses Jesus' bodily resurrection and ascension, then it is coherent for him to depict Jesus taking his blood into the heavenly

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<sup>135</sup> See esp. Wedderburn, "Sawing Off the Branches," esp. 401–4. Regarding the soteriological project of Hebrews Wedderburn deigns to conclude that the obvious incoherence of the author's thought might at least provide a helpful negative example for modern theologians. He writes, "The fault of the *auctor ad Hebraeos* is not so much his incoherence as his failure to perceive that he has been incoherent and that he indeed must be incoherent, given the nature of that which he sets out to describe. ... It is at best salutary that this author has laid bare, albeit unwittingly, the limitations of his argumentation. ... Hebrews ... lays great weight on one analogy [i.e., Yom Kippur] for the death of Christ, putting almost all of his eggs, so to speak, in the cultic basket, and attempting to wring out of this one image more than the image will coherently yield" (413–14). See also, e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 251, who appears to have a great deal more respect for the author than Wedderburn. Attridge argues that the writer simply has no intention of pushing too hard on the presentation side of the Yom Kippur metaphor.

holy of holies and offering it before God in order to obtain atonement. When the writer says that Jesus is the great high priest in heaven and that he offered his blood to God in heaven, he likely means precisely that. After arising to indestructible life and becoming the great high priest, Jesus took his blood/life into heaven and offered/presented it before God.

Given the blood-as-life equation discussed above and the centrality of the offering of that blood/life for procuring atonement, the author's repeated comments regarding Jesus' priestly service and offering as occurring in the presence of God in heaven (cf. 7:26, 8:1–2, 9:11, 9:23–25, and 10:12) do not need to be explained away as a metaphorical explication of the spiritual significance of Jesus' death on the cross.<sup>136</sup> They are instead an explication of the reality of Jesus' high-priestly status and ministry in light of his bodily resurrection and ascension.

Second, this hypothesis also aligns with the emphasis in Leviticus on the place of the presentation and manipulation of blood/life on Yom Kippur (and all the other blood offerings, for that matter) and the power that blood/life has to obtain redemption and make purification. It seems highly unlikely that the author of Hebrews thinks that Jesus effected purification by bringing his death into God's presence.

Third, the issue of the human being having to be glorified/perfected in order to enter the heavenly tabernacle and ultimately to enter into God's dwelling place correlates well with the importance of ritual purity in the Pentateuch, and especially in the Levitical

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<sup>136</sup> This study suggests that comments like that of Wedderburn that, "Hebrews seems to persist resolutely with cultic terminology even after it has, to all intents and purposes, dealt the cultic way of thought a *coup de grâce*" ("Sawing Off the Branches," 409) misconstrues the sacrificial logic of the argument.

system. If sacrificial blood has to do with the power of blood/life to overcome the malevolent forces of impurity/death, then the emphasis on life that this study has identified throughout Hebrews makes good sense. The author of Hebrews views Jesus' resurrection, entry into heaven, offering, and session at God's right hand in terms that agree with some of the primary concerns at the heart of the Levitical system of blood offering. Even the narrative of the elevation of humanity above the angels that underlies the argument of Heb 1–2 can be seen to be closely joined to the high-priestly Christology and the account of Jesus' atoning offering developed later in the homily. Specifically, the link between these concepts is not made by appeal to a two-stage model that forces a peripheral element of blood sacrifices—the slaughter of the animal—into the center of the ritual. Rather, the element that stands at the conceptual and practical center of such offering is the *life* into which the Son arose after his death.

This further implies that perfection and purification are closely connected for the author. The perfection that finally allows the human being to dwell fully in God's presence involves the purification of both the human body and the human spirit. This entails more than the eschatological resurrection (especially insofar as it involves forgiveness of sins), but it is certainly not less than that transformative event.

A fourth observation not yet discussed in detail in this study can also be addressed here. In general, the assumptions that blood in Hebrews symbolizes Jesus' death and that Yom Kippur emphasizes the slaughter of animal victims have hindered exegetes from observing that Hebrews rarely collocates sacrificial language with explicit reference to the death of Jesus. In fact, in only two places is there a clear collocation of death with



sacrificial language: 9:15–22 and 13:11–12. I will discuss the former text in detail below.<sup>137</sup> The latter passage, however, is especially significant, not only because this is the one place in the homily that explicitly links Jesus’ death with Yom Kippur, but also because of the way the author here correlates Jesus’ death, Jesus’ blood, and Yom Kippur. The verses read, “For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood” (NRSV).

Remarkably, in the one passage where Jesus’ suffering/death is plainly identified with a specific element of Yom Kippur (13:12), the author focuses on exactly the wrong moment. Wrong, that is, if the traditional understanding of how he maps Jesus’ death and exaltation onto Yom Kippur were correct. Instead of highlighting the correlation of Jesus’ crucifixion outside Jerusalem with the moment of the slaughter of the victim, he links it with the final act of the Yom Kippur ritual—the disposal of the victim’s body “outside the camp.” The atoning effect of the blood, however, is, fully in keeping with the understanding of blood sacrifice and Yom Kippur discussed above, correlated with the high priest’s act of carrying the blood into the holy of holies (13:11). It is the *entry* of the blood into the holy of holies that deals with sin and sanctifies the people. A careful mapping of Jesus’ suffering onto the moment of the slaughter of Yom Kippur is simply not what the author is about here. Rather, he depicts Jesus’ death in terms of his suffering

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<sup>137</sup> I discuss the role of Jesus’ death in Hebrews in more detail in section 4.4.

outside the gate because this is where the tradition says Jesus was crucified. When he isolates the atoning element, he points to the very act one might expect a Jewish author to highlight—the high priest carrying the blood into the holy of holies.

This is not to suggest that Jesus' death is insignificant here. Instead, it is to highlight that the moment of his death is not functioning as or being explained in terms of Yom Kippur in the way that so many commentators have assumed it must be. Given the other clear texts where Jesus' blood offering is said to have been made before God in the heavenly holy of holies, it follows that the distinction here between bodies being burned and blood being taken into the holy of holies to make atonement fits the larger model outlined above: Jesus first suffers and dies. He *then* arises to his high priesthood, ascends into heaven, takes his blood/life into the heavenly holy of holies, and obtains atonement. This sequence of events can be correlated with elements in Yom Kippur not because Jesus' death is the moment of his offering (in that case Heb 13:12 becomes incoherent), but because his death puts into motion the sequence of events that results in the crucial atoning moment—the presentation of his blood/life before God in heaven.

#### ***4.3.2.3 Summary: Jesus' Blood in Heaven and the New Covenant Offering***

In the preceding discussion I have noted the points in Hebrews where the author speaks of Jesus' blood being offered in heaven. This language is frequently interpreted as the writer's attempt to utilize blood sacrifice, especially the Yom Kippur offerings, as a metaphor to explain the atoning significance of Jesus' death. Many reasons have been given to call this standard reading into question. In particular, the biblical equation of blood and life and the centrality in Leviticus of the presentation of blood for obtaining

atonement where highlighted. In the Levitical system, blood offering does not have the death of the victim at its conceptual core. Rather, the blood/life is offered as a means of redeeming and purifying mortality. The goal of such offering is the peaceful dwelling of God with his people in close proximity. These points cohere remarkably well with the argument of this study for the place and role of Jesus' resurrection in Hebrews and the repeated claims of the author of Hebrews that Jesus effected atonement when he presented his blood before God in heaven.

#### ***4.3.3 The Offering of Jesus' Self in Heaven***

I have discussed the identification of Jesus' body and blood in terms of the offering he made. I have tried to show that, in keeping with the presence and role of Jesus' resurrection in the argument and the emphases in Levitical blood offering, it is plausible to envision Jesus' body and blood being presented to God in heaven. I turn now to examine the other term the author uses for Jesus' offering—Jesus' “self”/“himself.” As with the body and blood language, I argue that the idea of Jesus offering *himself* both coheres with and provides yet more evidence for the conclusion that the author conceives of atonement in terms of Jesus presenting his offering before God in heaven.

In Heb 7:27 the offering Jesus made is contrasted with those of the high priests. The high priests offer up sacrifices first for their own sins (πρότερον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἰδίων ἁμαρτιῶν θυσίας ἀναφέρειν—this would be the blood of the bull) and then on behalf of the people (the blood of the goat). Jesus accomplished once for all what the high priests do repeatedly, “having offered up himself” (ἑαυτὸν ἀνεπέγκας). In keeping with the discussion above about the centrality of the blood that is offered as effecting

atonement, there can be little doubt that the idea implicit in this contrast is that the high priests repeatedly offer blood (the object that is their sacrifice—viz. the blood of a bull and the blood of a goat) for their own sins and then for those of the people, while Jesus offers instead “himself” and that offering was presented once for all time.

Again, the primary place, indeed the distinctive location of these two קָדְשׁ קְדָשִׁים blood presentations on Yom Kippur, is the holy of holies. While other קָדְשׁ קְדָשִׁים sacrifices involve taking blood into the first sanctum, only on Yom Kippur is blood taken into the inner sanctum. The contrast here implies that Jesus offered himself in the appropriate equivalent of the earthly holy of holies and as the appropriate replacement for the blood of a bull and a goat. It follows, then, that the language of Jesus’ “self” in this context is roughly equivalent to that of Jesus’ blood. That is to say, whereas the high priests offer the blood of bulls and goats in the holy of holies in the earthly tabernacle, Jesus offers *himself* in the holy of holies in the heavenly tabernacle (cf. 9:11–12).

The conclusion that Jesus’ “blood” and “self” are basically equivalent terms for the author is born out by the fact that the next two references to Jesus offering “himself” (9:14, 25) are closely collocated with mention of his blood. In 9:13–14 the author states that if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the red heifer<sup>138</sup> have the power to purify the flesh, how much more will “the *blood* of Christ, who through the eternal spirit has offered *himself* blameless to God (τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅς διὰ πνεύματος

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<sup>138</sup> Jacob Milgrom makes the interesting observation that the red color of the heifer was significant in this act of purification since blood is also red (“The Paradox of the Red Cow [Num. XIX],” *VT* 31 (1981): 62–72, here 65).

αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἄμωμον τῷ θεῷ) purify our conscience from dead works in order to serve the living God.”

Clearly the author has conflated a number of purification rituals here (the red heifer<sup>139</sup> and the priestly consecration rituals seem evident). The immediately prior allusions in 9:12 to the Yom Kippur קַיְטִיבּ offerings, however, indicate that even in the midst of this conflation of rituals, the purification (καθαρότητα, 9:13; καθαρῆι, 9:14) and redemption (λύτρωσις, 9:12) of the Yom Kippur offerings are of chief significance. Thus, as in 7:27, Jesus is here depicted as offering “himself” in a context where this offering is correlated with the Yom Kippur blood offerings. Jesus presents himself to God as a blameless offering.<sup>140</sup> The writer here applies language to Jesus that is appropriate

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<sup>139</sup> The allusion to the red heifer ritual is especially interesting since this ritual was, in terms of studies like those of Sanders (e.g., *Jewish Law*), strictly about impurity, not about sin. In particular, the red heifer ritual dealt with corpse impurity. As was suggested above, the author of Hebrews does not appear to draw a bright line between sin and impurity. His conflation of rituals here appears to further substantiate this conclusion.

<sup>140</sup> This offering is διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου. The phrase is sometimes taken as further evidence for the author’s emphasis on the spiritual quality of Jesus’ sacrifice (e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 251). Not only does the cumulative case of this study weigh against such an interpretation, it is also far from clear that διὰ indicates the mode or quality of Jesus’ offering. Given the role and presence of Jesus’ resurrection in this homily, I suggest that this phrase identifies the holy spirit as the power that enables Jesus to present his offering. The “eternal spirit” probably refers to the holy spirit, which has recently been mentioned (9:8). Significantly, the idea that God would send a spirit to renew his people at the resurrection is attested in some strains of Jewish apocalypticism. Paul, for example, speaks of God’s own spirit resurrecting Jesus from the dead and being given to God’s people in order to resurrect their mortal bodies from the dead (Rom 8:11; cf. 8:18–23, where the creation groans while it awaits the revelation of God’s glory in his children—the redemption of their bodies). At Qumran one also finds the idea that in the eschaton God will visit his people and bring them endless life and, in language reminiscent of Ps 8, a crown of glory (כְּבוֹד; the verb “to crown” attested in the MT is עָטַר, though in *Tg. Ps.* 8:6, a much later document, the Aramaic verb כָּלַל is used) and a garment of light (see 1QS 4:6–8; cf. 3:17, where humanity is said to have been created to rule the world). This looks like resurrection language (cf. also the reference to the new creation in 4:25). Moreover, closely linked with the receipt of this crown of glory and garment of light is the idea that in this visitation God will remove the evil spirit from the flesh of his people and purify them with a spirit of holiness (4:18–23). In light of this evidence and the larger argument of this study, the comment in Heb 9:14 that Jesus offered himself “through the eternal spirit” should probably be understood in terms of the idea

for the animals selected for the  $\aleph\aleph\aleph\aleph$  offerings—they had to be ἄμωμος.<sup>141</sup> Yet, as has been shown, it was the blood/life of those animals that played the central role in achieving purification. Thus the desired effect (purification and redemption for God’s people) is produced by the presentation of his blood (9:12)/self (9:14). Just as in 7:27, Jesus’ offering of himself and presentation of his blood are functionally equivalent here.

The same equivalency occurs even more explicitly in 9:25. The earthly high priest is depicted as having to go every year into the holy of holies to offer the blood. The earthly high priest, moreover, is further said to enter the holy of holies “with the blood of another” (ἐν αἵματι ἄλλοτρίῳ), that is, with blood other than his own (i.e., that of a bull and a goat). Jesus, by way of contrast, is said to have appeared before God’s presence (9:24) not to offer *himself* many times (οὐδ’ ἵνα πολλάκις προσφέρῃ ἑαυτόν), but now once for all time (συνὴ δὲ ἅπαξ; 9:26). The presentation of himself, in other words, is the item/offering being contrasted with the presentation of the blood of the  $\aleph\aleph\aleph\aleph$  animals on Yom Kippur. When the author goes on in 9:26 to say that Jesus appeared once for all time at the consummation of the ages for the purpose of the annulment (ἀθέτησις) of sin through his sacrifice (διὰ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ), he is arguing that Jesus’ presentation of

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that in the eschatological resurrection the holy spirit is given to the righteous dead to glorify them. In the case of Jesus, who has already received this resurrection, the eternal spirit is likely mentioned here because this is the power that enabled him to enter heaven and make his offering. In his resurrection the eternal spirit transformed his mortal body into a glorified, indestructible body capable of entering God’s heavenly presence.

<sup>141</sup> In the Greek Bible ἄμωμος is applied to all four types of blood offerings (for the burnt offerings see Lev 1:3; the peace offerings, Lev 3:1; the sin/purification offerings, Lev 4:3, 14; the guilt offerings, Lev 5:15).

his blood/self before God in the heavenly holy of holies (cf. 9:24–25) *is* the sacrifice (θυσία).<sup>142</sup> Jesus’ “self” is the object (the sacrifice) that he offered when he appeared before God. Jesus’ “self” is therefore the sacrifice that effected atonement.

Thus the language of blood can, therefore, be employed symbolically by the author. At points (7:28; 9:14, 25) the writer uses the language of Jesus’ blood and that of Jesus’ self interchangeably. Moreover, as with Jesus’ blood, this offering of himself is portrayed as occurring when he appeared before God in the heavenly holy of holies.

Given the findings above concerning the blood-as-life equation in the Levitical blood offering system, I suggest that the equation of blood and self works not because the writer conceives of the offering of Jesus as the moment of his death, but because he envisions Jesus’ self in terms of his resurrected *life*. This is consistent with the author’s depiction of Jesus *appearing* in heaven and presenting *himself* before God. These findings allow for a fresh assessment of the writer’s summary of his discussion of Jesus’ offering in 10:19–20. It is hardly a coincidence that, as he transitions into another parenetic discourse, he highlights the fact that Jesus’ blood and flesh have opened a new and *living* way into God’s presence.

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<sup>142</sup> The genitive αὐτοῦ is most likely a simple possessive genitive—the sacrifice is explicitly Jesus’ own (in contrast to the offering of blood by the earthly high priest, which is blood that does not belong to him, but to another). The tradition in English translations to interpret this as an objective genitive and render αὐτοῦ with a reflexive sense (viz. “the sacrifice of himself,” e.g., RSV, NRSV, ESV, NIV) is an unfortunate rendering that appears to assume that Jesus’ willing submission to crucifixion/death is the content/object of his offering. In the context, the parallels between “blood,” “himself,” and “sacrifice” indicate, at the very least, that the object he offers as his sacrifice (i.e., θυσία as noun, the object offered to God, not as the action of sacrifice/slaughter) is offered in heaven in God’s presence (9:24). It is unlikely, given the discussion of blood/life above and the author’s preference for προσφέρω, that he intended to portray Jesus sacrificing himself here.

#### 4.3.4 Unveiling Jesus' Flesh: Hebrews 10:19–20 and the Embodied Son in the Heavenly Οἴκουμένη

In an essay published in 1970 Otfried Hofius offered an intriguing account of Heb 10:19–20.<sup>143</sup> He contended that the last clause in 10:20—τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ (“that is, his flesh”)—should not be read as an exegetical comment further defining τὸ καταπέτασμα (“the veil”), but in reference to the entire clause of v. 20a, and therefore to the act of passing through the veil. Hofius posited that, by virtue of ellipsis, the διὰ present in v. 20a has not been explicitly repeated in v. 20b. He added that, in keeping with evidence from Hebrews itself,<sup>144</sup> one is justified in assuming that the explicit use of διὰ in v. 20a has a local meaning, while the implicit use in v. 20b has an instrumental sense. As such, Jesus' flesh is not being defined *as* the veil in v. 20b, and thus the thing/stuff which he passed through, but rather *as the element by means of which he passed through the veil*. Jesus' flesh, Hofius argued further, should be understood as a reference to the Son's incarnation.

Hofius' proposal has not been widely accepted. Two main factors explain this. First, at the level of syntax, the simplest interpretation of v. 20b takes the clause as defining the veil in v. 20a. Second, many scholars argue that Hebrews 10:20 symbolically depicts Jesus' flesh/body in terms the veil of the tabernacle separating the inner holy of

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<sup>143</sup> See Otfried Hofius, “Inkarnation und Opfertod Jesu nach Hebr 10,19f.,” in *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde: Exegetische Untersuchungen Joachim Jeremias zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet von seinen Schülern* (ed. Eduard Lohse et al; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 132–41; Idem, *Der Vorhang*, 76–84.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. the alternating uses of διὰ in 9:11–12, arguably a bookend or parallel thought to that of 10:19–20.



holies from the holy place.<sup>145</sup> The image of the Son passing through his flesh as if it were that veil is generally understood as another metaphorical reference to his death.<sup>146</sup>

In view of the prior discussion, I suggest that Hofius was on the right track. Jesus' flesh is not the veil that he passed through when he died in order to enter God's presence. Here in Heb 10:20 the confidence offered as inspiration for the auditors is not oriented towards Jesus' death. Rather, in keeping with the importance of Jesus' vindication in Heb 10 discussed above, the way opened to them through the veil and into the holy of holies where the presence of God dwells—i.e., into the promised inheritance of the οἰκουμένη to come—is described as new (πρόσφατον)<sup>147</sup> and *living* (ζῶσαν). The way opened by Jesus is new because access to this realm was not available to God's people through the Mosaic covenant (cf. 11:39–40). It is living because the one who opened it did so by virtue of his resurrection.

The syntactically possible reading of Heb 10:20 offered by Hofius, in which Jesus passes through the veil of the heavenly tabernacle by means of his flesh, may not be the simplest one, but the context of the argument of Hebrews more than tilts the balance of probability in its favor. Moreover, Hofius was headed in the right direction when he pointed to Jesus' incarnation as the meaning of “flesh” in 10:20. Where he went wrong was to limit this to Jesus' life on earth. Jesus' earthly life (and death) per se is not the

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<sup>145</sup> E.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 285; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 520.

<sup>146</sup> See, for example, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 285–87.

<sup>147</sup> The sense of πρόσφατος as “freshly sacrificed” is intriguing, but as most commentators rightly note the word has lost its sense and connection with sacrifice by the early Common Era (see the excellent discussion in Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 518–19). The sense of the adjective here is that of “recent.” The newness, in other words, has the quality of being temporally recent.

means by which Jesus' blood and flesh, that is, his body, were offered to God. Jesus' glorified incarnational existence—his resurrected flesh and blood—entering the holy of holies in heaven effected atonement.

To put the matter differently, the thought in Heb 10:19–20 epitomizes the argument of Heb 9:11–10:18. It is by means of his blood (διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος [9:12]; ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ [10:19])—that is, by means of the sacrifice he offered (διὰ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ [9:26]), which includes the presentation of his human body to God (διὰ τῆς προσφορᾶς τοῦ σώματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [10:10]; τοῦτ' ἔστιν [διὰ] τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ [10:20])—that Jesus passed *through* the heavenly tabernacle and the veil (9:11, διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειότερας σκηνῆς; 10:20, διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος) into God's presence to present his body/blood/self in order to make atonement. Just as the blood of bulls and goats carried by the Levitical high priests is both the agent that enables them to pass through the veil and enter the earthly holy of holies (9:12) *and* the object offered as the means by which they obtain atonement (9:13), so it is in the case of Jesus. The sacrifice he carried with him (his blood/body/self) both enabled him to pass through the veil of the heavenly tabernacle *and* served as the sacrifice he offered to God in order to obtain atonement. Like the blood carried by the high priest, the power of Jesus' resurrection life not only protected him as he entered God's presence, it was also the sufficient means for obtaining atonement.

#### ***4.3.5 Summary: Jesus' Living Presence as His Atoning Offering in Heaven***

The preceding observations demonstrate that the author of Hebrews uses the language of Jesus' body, blood, and self to identify the sacrifice—that is, *what* Jesus

offered—that he presented to God in the heavenly holy of holies. As was noted, interpreters generally assume that Jesus’ death on the cross forms the conceptual center around which this language orbits.

In keeping with the argument of the last two chapters of this study—viz. the significance of Jesus’ humanity in heaven and the writer’s own claims concerning when Jesus became the great high priest and where he serves—the preceding discussion suggests a very different conclusion. The conceptual center is not Jesus’ earthly death outside the gates of Jerusalem, but his *living, human, presence* in heaven. Jesus’ bodily resurrection to indestructible life, that is, holds together the writer’s depictions of Jesus’ offering of his body, his blood, and himself before God in heaven.

Thus, insofar as one can isolate the center of the author’s understanding of atonement, it is not ultimately Jesus’ death that is his sacrifice, but his *life*. Jesus’ *living presence* in heaven, predicated on the resurrection and ascension of his human body, was the sacrifice he offered to God in the heavenly holy of holies. After making this presentation and effecting purification, he was elevated to the heavenly throne where he presently sits awaiting the subjugation of all his enemies. He will one day return from that heavenly location to the earthly realm at the consummation of all things, the point at which all his siblings will join him in the inheritance of their eternal salvation.

Such an understanding of the atonement in Hebrews not only has the merit of cohesion with other elements of the homily, but also of being intelligible in terms of a theological model of blood offerings that closely parallels the depictions of blood sacrifice in Leviticus. With this hypothesis it becomes clear, in terms likely to be

intelligible to biblically literate Jews of the early Common Era, *how* Jesus' offering effected atonement. The offering of Jesus' body, blood, and self is the presentation of his *life* before God. The offering of Jesus' resurrected life, which, as has been shown, is itself predicated upon the full sweep of his earthly obedience even to the point of enduring the shame of death on the cross, can be understood to function in the way that blood functions in the biblical portrayal of the Levitical sacrificial system—it has the power both to redeem and to purify.

How then does Jesus' *death* function in Hebrews? I turn now to consider briefly some of the unambiguous ways the author explicates and emphasizes the role of Jesus' death. In general, as in Heb 13:12, Jesus' death is the primary moment of his suffering. As such, I suggest that Jesus' death is envisioned by the author as the time of Jesus' preparation for making his offering and as the event that triggers or inaugurates the implementation of the new covenant.

#### ***4.4 Jesus' Death in Hebrews: Preparation for His Atoning Offering***

I have argued above that Jesus' resurrection performs several distinct yet interrelated functions in the christological and soteriological reflection in Hebrews. In a similar way, the death of Jesus can be seen as an event that accomplishes more than one thing in the argument. Jesus' death serves at least two important purposes: 1) In his death, Jesus serves as *the* paradigm of righteous suffering—an example for all who would be faithful;<sup>148</sup> and 2) Jesus' death stands as the event *sine qua non* for initiating the new

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<sup>148</sup> I have already argued this point at length in chapter three of this study.

covenant and in Jesus' *preparation* for his high-priestly ministry and atoning offering. The latter point clarifies how Jesus' death can also be seen to be the first element in the larger process of blood sacrifice, without being conflated or collapsed by the author into the central act of offering that effects atonement. In the author's schema, Jesus' death is therefore necessary, though not by itself sufficient, for the atonement he procured.

#### ***4.4.1 Jesus' Death in Hebrews 2: The Son's Mortal Humanity***

The first plain references to Jesus' death occur in Heb 2:9–10 and 14–18. In context these references to Jesus' suffering show up as part of the larger argument for the Son's elevation in the world to come above the angelic spirits. I have already discussed this passage at some length in chapter two of this study.<sup>149</sup> Here, though, I note that Jesus' death is not depicted in sacrificial terms. The logic in these passages emphasizes the Son's representative participation in the mortal, human condition and his subsequent elevation in the heavenly realms, again, as a representative of his human siblings. As a human being the Son, Jesus, suffered, died, and was perfected. His elevation to the pinnacle of the world to come is therefore a function of his humanity's being made immortal. This suggests that an underlying narrative logic is in play. Jesus died, was perfected by virtue of enduring that suffering, and was elevated above the angels. This pattern, moreover, opens up the way for other humans to follow him. How this happens is not yet explained by the author, but it is anticipated. In Heb 2:17–18 he points out that

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<sup>149</sup> See sections 2.5.2–3 above.

Jesus has become (γένηται) a faithful and merciful high priest on behalf of those who confess him.

The logical and temporal progression just highlighted is especially significant for the thesis proposed in this study. As just noted, the high-priestly Christology and sacrificial soteriology are not completely absent from the argument in Heb 1–2. Interestingly, though, these points are not explicitly discussed until the end of Heb 2, where they are not directly correlated with Jesus’ death. The conclusion drawn in 2:17 (ὄθεν) from the discussion of Jesus’ death in 2:14–16 suggests that the Son’s experience of mortality functioned as a prerequisite for his high-priestly status. The Son had to be made like his brothers in every respect (including, in this context, full mortality—death), so that (ἵνα) he might become (γένηται) a merciful and faithful high priest “with respect to the things offered to God in order to effect atonement for the sins of the people” (τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εἰς τὸ ἰλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἀμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ).<sup>150</sup>

The idea that his suffering is a precondition for him to become a high priest fits with the argument advanced in chapter three of this study regarding the role of Jesus’ resurrection in Heb 5–7 as a qualification for his elevation to the high priesthood. Jesus’ death, in other words, had to happen before Jesus became a high priest. This is not to exclude an experiential component as part of Jesus’ high-priestly qualifications. Jesus’ experience of suffering enables him to become a *merciful and faithful* high priest who can sympathize with his siblings. But neither does it exclude Jesus’ being raised up into

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<sup>150</sup> The emphasis in this chapter on Jesus’ humanity also aligns with the writer’s comment in 5:1 that every high priest is ἐξ ἀνθρώπων. Jesus has to be a human being to be a *high* priest.

indestructible life after enduring suffering as a qualification for him *to become a merciful and faithful high priest*. Jesus' suffering and death serve to prepare him for his high-priestly ministry not only because it enables the Son to sympathize with his siblings (something an angel presumably cannot do), but also because it issues in his resurrection into the indestructible, resurrection life that qualifies him, in spite of his tribal lineage, to serve as a high priest.

#### ***4.4.2 Jesus' Death in Hebrews 5:7–10 and 12:2: Jesus as the Righteous Sufferer***

The suffering and death of Jesus are not brought up again in Hebrews until 5:7–10. Notably, as in Heb 2, Jesus' suffering is not portrayed here in plainly sacrificial terms. I have discussed this passage at length in chapter three of this study.<sup>151</sup> I argued there that Jesus' suffering and death are paradigmatic of the righteous one who faithfully endures suffering. As such, Jesus was rewarded with the promised life and inheritance God has promised to all his children. Here the language of perfection already found in Heb 2 shows up again. In Heb 2:10 Jesus' being made perfect through suffering implies that his perfection follows from his suffering. Moreover, this is presented as the means by which the "many sons" are themselves able to be perfected. In this context, perfection is closely linked with Jesus' becoming the source of eternal salvation (5:9). Jesus' perfection is more clearly presented here as a prerequisite for becoming the source of salvation. Again, as I argued, the larger context points toward Jesus' resurrection as the moment when Jesus obtained perfection and also the quality of life he needed to become

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<sup>151</sup> See section 3.5.

a high priest. Thus, Jesus' suffering holds here the same place in the larger sequence of events as it does in Heb 2—it is a prerequisite to Jesus' becoming a high priest.

This same logic and sequence recurs in one of only two places in Hebrews where direct reference to the crucifixion/cross occurs—Heb 12:2. Here, where Jesus stands at the apex of the list of those who endured suffering because of their faith in the promises of God, the cross is singled out as *the* trial that Jesus endured. The cross functions in the case of Jesus just as the various trials functioned in many of the examples of faithful people noted in Heb 11. Those saints endured their trials because they looked forward in faith to the better realities God promised them. In the same way Jesus endured the cross on account of the joy (ἀντὶ ... χαρᾶς)<sup>152</sup> that was set before him (cf. 10:34 where the audience is reminded that in the past they too have endured trials with joy [μετὰ χαρᾶς] in the confidence that God had promised them better things).

The crucial point is that, having faithfully endured this trial, he *received* the promises toward which he looked—in particular, he was brought out of death and invited to sit on the throne promised to David's heir in Ps 110:4 (cf. 2:9). Hebrews 12:2 is sometimes presented as further evidence for the author's humiliation-exaltation (that is,

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<sup>152</sup> Commentators note that ἀντὶ could indicate the goal of Jesus' endurance (so, "for the sake of" the joy set before him) or that which he gave up in order to obtain salvation (so, "instead of the joy" set before him). The logic of the argument in Hebrews, and especially in Heb 10–11, that those who endure receive the reward of God's promises strongly suggests "for the sake of" as the most natural meaning of the preposition here. Jesus endured his trial in order to receive the joy of God's promises. The fact that the only other instance of ἀντὶ in the homily also means "for the sake of" (12:16) further corroborates this conclusion (so also, e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 357, who notes the way this understanding coheres with the logic of those in Heb 11 enduring suffering to obtain God's rewards).



resurrectionless) Christology.<sup>153</sup> Three things indicate that the logical progression from humiliation to exaltation hinges on the writer's confession of Jesus' bodily resurrection: 1) the import of Jesus' humanity in Heb 1–2 for his elevation above the angels, 2) the place of Jesus' resurrected life in Heb 5–7 in the argument for his high-priestly status; and 3) the promise of life held out to all those who faithfully endure in Heb 11 (cf. 10:36–39).

Significantly, then, it must be noted that Heb 12:2 does not utilize sacrificial language or categories when speaking of the cross. In keeping with the parenetic thrust of the preceding material in Heb 11, the cross is presented as Jesus' moment of trial. His death is part of his preparation for his entry into his divinely ordained inheritance (God called him to be Son, cf. 5:5) and his divinely ordained ministry (God also called him to be priest, cf. 5:6). He faithfully endured that trial. Therefore God highly exalted him, accepting his high-priestly offering and granting him the right to sit on the eternal throne promised to David's scion. The implication is plain: the audience must also endure so that they too will inherit God's promises to them.

That this is the point the author seeks to drive home follows not only from the immediately preceding context of 12:2 (i.e., the list of those who did not shrink back but looked forward to the better land, city, and resurrection life God promised to his people, 10:35–12:1), but also from the fact that in 12:3–11 he directly applies Jesus' exemplary suffering to the audience in order to exhort them to continue to endure. As those living in

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<sup>153</sup> E.g., Georg Bertram, "Die Himmelfahrt Jesu vom Kreuz aus und der Glaube an seine Auferstehung," in *Festgabe für A. Deissmann zum 60. Geburtstag 7. November 1926* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), 187–215, see 214; Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (2d ed.; HNT 14; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), 110.

the “last days” they must endure during the penultimate age, the period of discipline, knowing that such endurance will issue in their obtaining fully the inheritance God promised them. Jesus stands for them as the ultimate example of this pattern. They can look to Jesus—God’s Son and their great high priest—and know that the period of discipline will soon come to an end and they will fully inherit the promised land (cf. 11:39–40, 12:22–29).

#### ***4.4.3 Hebrews 6:6: Recrucifying the Son?***

Apart from 12:2, the author’s only other reference to crucifixion is in the strange comment in Heb 6:6 about a recrucifixion of the Son of God. Many commentators think the recrucifixion mentioned here figurally depicts the seriousness with which the author depicts the state of falling away. There is no renewal to repentance because those who fall away are, in effect, recrucifying the Son and exposing him to shame.<sup>154</sup> Whatever the comment means, for the purposes of this study it is sufficient to note that as with 2:9–10, 14–18; 5:7–10, and 12:2, the notion of Jesus’ crucifixion is not portrayed here in sacrificial terms.

#### ***4.4.4 Jesus’ Death in Hebrews 9: Initiating the New Covenant***

I noted toward the end of section 4.3.2.2 above that Jesus’ death in Hebrews is explicitly collocated with sacrificial language only twice in the entire homily: Heb 9:15 and 13:12. I have already discussed the latter verse. I turn now to an exegesis of Heb 9:15–22.

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<sup>154</sup> E.g., Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 324.

The writer states, “And for this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, because a death occurred for (εἰς) redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) from those transgressions against (ἐπί)<sup>155</sup> the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the eternal inheritance.”<sup>156</sup> The language of redemption here, particularly in view of the comment in 9:12 that Jesus obtained λύτρωσις by means of his own blood, must bear a sacrificial connotation. The redemption, in other words, is the kind of redemption one receives because blood was offered (and, given the context, on account of the Yom Kippur offerings in particular).

I suggest, though, that it is not necessary to assume that the death itself—presumably of Jesus—is identified here as the agent that effects the redemption. A death occurring for redemption is not self-evidently a use of the term *death* as a synecdoche for the whole process of blood offering. The preposition εἰς might mean “for” as in “for the purpose of.” The preposition, however, can also indicate a result. If it bears a resultative sense here, the translation “for” would be clarified as something like “resulting in.” In either case the death is not itself unambiguously identified with the *means* of redemption.

Given the case argued above, in particular that the author of Hebrews is careful to highlight the presentation of the blood within the process of blood offering as the atoning moment, then the resultative sense of εἰς is highly likely. Jesus’ death *did* result in redemption being obtained. Without his death, none of the other events follow in the

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<sup>155</sup> The tradition in the English translations to translate ἐπί as “under” is puzzling (so, e.g., KJV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, ESV), though ancient (see the Vulgate’s *sub*).

<sup>156</sup> My translation.

argument—there is no resurrection, he is not qualified to be a high priest, and he is not elevated to heavenly royalty. There would be no ascension and no presentation of his blood in the heavenly holy of holies. In short, Jesus could not make any atoning offering if he had not died, just as no atoning offering can be made on Yom Kippur without the slaughter of the bull and the goat. In the Levitical system the death of the victim is necessary, but as was shown above, it is not by itself sufficient for, nor is it the center of, the obtainment of atonement. If this larger understanding of how sacrifice works is in play, then, while the author here slides from one part of the sacrificial process to another—specifically the initiating event and the final result—he is not conflating Jesus’ death and the atonement.

Having said that, the near context of Heb 9:15 presents other challenges to the larger argument of this study. The author clearly links death and blood language in this passage. The discussion of the death of the testator of a will (διαθήκη) having to be established before the will goes into effect (vv. 16–17) transitions into a discussion of the necessity of blood for the inauguration of the first covenant (ἡ πρώτη [διαθήκη], v. 18)—“hence the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood” (ὅθεν οὐδὲ ἡ πρώτη χωρὶς αἵματος ἐγκεκάνισται). This is not the only place in Hebrews where the language of “blood” denotes death (cf. 12:4, where persecution is implied in the context).

For the sake of clarity, this study is not asserting that every reference to blood in biblical and related traditions is a reference to life. Blood language can and does, in particular contexts, serve as a synonym for death in Jewish religious texts. A distinction should, however, be made between contexts that focus on the presentation of blood to

God by ritual manipulation (sprinkling and pouring out) for the purpose of atonement and the use of blood language in contexts where there is no ritual manipulation for the purpose of atonement (such as manslaughter, murder, the battlefield, persecution). In the former instances, the Levitical system clearly identifies blood as life. What makes Heb 9:18 so interesting for this study—and so distinctive in Hebrews—is the fact that here, in a context where the ritual manipulation of blood is close to hand (9:15, 22), blood is apparently used for death.

The solution I propose does not diminish or deny the link in 9:18 between blood and death. The nature of the comparison made by the author between a will and God's covenants, however, needs to be recognized. As is often noted, the author capitalizes here on a pun that would likely be obvious to Greek-speaking Jewry. God's covenants in Greek are διαθήκαι, the same word for wills or testaments in Greek. While blood sacrifice is inextricably bound up with the Mosaic διαθήκη (the "first covenant"), the fact that it is a διαθήκη allows the author to create a pun. The play on the word entails a momentary shift in his discussion from the conceptual world of Jewish sacrifice and covenants toward the conceptual world of last wills and testaments. He moves, that is, from one part of the semantic range of the word διαθήκη into another. In the realm of wills/testaments death is an important element (even as it is in the larger Christology and soteriology developed by the author). The writer's point here is that a will does not go into effect until the one who made it dies. In an analogous way, he notes, the first covenant was inaugurated (ἐγκεκάνισται, 9:18) with blood. Animals were slaughtered

when the covenant was inaugurated. Similarly, the new covenant has a death, that of Jesus, at its inauguration.

After scoring the point, one that would probably be obvious to the original audience, he moves back into the semantic domain of God's biblical covenants. Once back in that semantic world, he also returns to the language of blood manipulation where blood is sprinkled (9:21) and poured out (9:22) in order to procure forgiveness (9:22) and purification (9:23).<sup>157</sup>

The primary virtue of the reading just presented is that it respects both the near context of the author's discussion in 9:15–22 and the larger context of the argument of Hebrews in a way that suggests the general consistency of the writer's thought. This is not to suggest that there is no overlap here between the concepts of death (including Jesus' death) and those of blood offering and atonement (redemption and purification). There is overlap in 9:18.

Again, for the purpose of clarification, the larger argument of this study should not be taken to imply that the author of Hebrews thinks of Jesus' death as a mundane slaughter. Because Jesus' blood/life does go into the heavenly holy of holies and get offered to God, Jesus' death can be seen as sacrificial. The argument of this study is that

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<sup>157</sup> Given the emphasis in the near context on the ritual manipulation of blood and the relationship between blood manipulation and atonement in the Levitical sacrificial system, the tradition in English translation to render the *hapax* αίματεκχυσία as “shedding of blood” is unfortunate (KJV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, ESV). In English, the phrase “to shed blood” denotes an act of killing or slaughter, not the ritual manipulation of blood for the purpose of atonement. While the collocation of αίμα with a form of the verb ἐκχέω/ἐκχύνω can mean “to shed blood” (e.g., Gen 9:6; 37:2; Joel 4:19; Lam 4:13; Matt 23:35), in the context of sacrifice this is plainly not the meaning (e.g., Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34; 8:15; 9:9). Something like “pouring out of blood” is, therefore, a more accurate English rendering of αίματεκχυσία since it is not the slaughter of the animal that brings the benefits of the sacrifice (purification and forgiveness), but when, where, and by whom the blood is sprinkled, poured out, and applied.

a sacrificial death is not the point at which atonement is obtained. The presentation of the blood is the means of atonement. The manipulation of the blood/life is the center of the process. In fact, some evidence from early rabbinic literature indicates that for some rabbis the key distinction between mundane and sacrificial slaughter is what happens next, and specifically, what happens to the blood. A slaughter is the performance of a sacrifice when the blood is properly presented to God.<sup>158</sup> Thus, what happens *after* the death of the victim is determinative.

It seems highly likely that the traditions the author and his audience know about Jesus present his death and the salvation he procured in synecdochal terms. This is apparent in Paul, for example.<sup>159</sup> One of the implications of this study is that *it is part of the distinctive theological reflection in this homily that the author expands upon the mechanics of the process of sacrifice* in order to show *how*, in biblical terms, Jesus, as the high priest he is confessed to be, effected atonement. The writer is not denying the place of Jesus' death in effecting salvation, but clarifying where that event fits in a larger process.<sup>160</sup> That event is not conflated with the atoning moment, but located at the front end of a process that culminates in the atoning moment.

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<sup>158</sup> Cf. *Sipre* 129.

<sup>159</sup> One thinks, for instance, of 1 Cor 15:3, 17. In 15:3 Paul cites an early creed that speaks of Christ dying for sins, which seems to suggest that atonement happened at the cross. In 15:17, however, Paul tells the Corinthians that if Christ was not raised, they are still in their sins. This suggests that the cross is not sufficient for atonement (cf. Rom 4:25).

<sup>160</sup> Some scholars have noticed the importance of seeing sacrifice as a process (see esp. Richard D. Nelson, "He Offered Himself": Sacrifice in Hebrews," *Int* 57 [2003]: 251–65). The tendency to ignore or deny Jesus' resurrection coupled with assumptions about the significance and centrality of slaughter in Jewish sacrifice have often led to a failure to appreciate the sweep and significance of the elements of the process.

As Gilders has cautioned, there is more to blood sacrifice than just the offering of the blood/life. Eberhart and others are certainly right to point out that the slaughter of the animal without the manipulation of the blood provides no atonement. One could also say, however, that without the slaughter of the animal there is no blood to manipulate and thus no atonement. While blood manipulation may be the central or most important element in the process that results in atonement (especially on Yom Kippur), it cannot finally be abstracted from the slaughter of the victim. The various elements of the ritual are necessary, but no one of them alone is sufficient.

With respect to the question of Jesus' death in Hebrews, this last point implies that, while the author has not collapsed the atoning offering of Jesus into his crucifixion, he has also not abstracted the death of Jesus from the process of the Yom Kippur ritual. A more subtle account of Jesus' death than that traditionally assumed is required. In view of the larger resurrection logic that this study has identified in Hebrews, the death of Jesus should be understood as the primary event that triggers or puts into motion the sequence of events that culminates in Jesus' offering and elevation to throne at God's right hand. Between the death of Jesus and the offering of his sacrifice is, I have argued, the resurrection.

The kind of logic just suggested also aligns with the reference to Jesus' suffering in Heb 9:26. Here the author stresses the singularity of Jesus' suffering. Jesus appeared once for all time; he does not present himself many times (9:25) because then he would have to have suffered many times. The assumption underlying this claim is likely to be that Jesus *cannot* suffer multiple times. If he had to make multiple offerings, he would



have had to suffer multiple times, but he cannot suffer multiple times. If this is right, the writer's earlier claims that Jesus is no longer subject to death almost certainly drives the logic of this argument. That is, the argument of 9:26 most likely works on the premise that after Jesus died he rose with the power of an indestructible life (cf. 7:15–16, 23–24, 28). Jesus cannot suffer multiple times because, after suffering once, he arose to perfection—a life never again able to be subject to death. The “once for all” character of Jesus' offering is, therefore, bound up with Jesus' resurrection. The logic of repeatable offerings, by way of contrast, is inextricably linked with death (cf. 7:23–25).

Granting this reading of 9:26, the death/suffering of Jesus can again be seen to be the event that puts into motion the process that results in atonement. The suffering of Jesus leads to his resurrection, which makes it impossible for him to die again. His resurrection means he has crossed over into the coming world/age. Entering heaven, he appeared before God (9:24, 26)<sup>161</sup> and obtained atonement. His death sets the sequence into motion. His appearance before God in heaven effects atonement. The bridge between the two is his resurrection.

#### **4.4.5 Summary**

For the author of Hebrews, the death of Jesus is a *sine qua non* for the atoning offering he makes in heaven. It is the first element in a sequence of events that culminates in Jesus' elevation to the throne at God's right hand. The death, however, is not conflated

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<sup>161</sup> In view of Jesus' appearing before God in heaven to make his offering for sin (9:24–25), his having appeared (πεφανερωται) at the end of the ages to do away with sin by means of (διὰ) his sacrifice (9:26) is likely another reference to the appearance of the glorified, human Jesus in heaven. The notion of Jesus being visible continues in 9:28 where the author says he will again be seen (ὀφθήσεται) when he returns to bring salvation to those awaiting him.

by the writer with the moment at which atonement is obtained. Rather, it precedes, logically and temporally, the offering of blood/life that Jesus brings into God's presence.

Perhaps because Jesus' death is not viewed synecdochally, the author can throughout his homily place unparalleled emphasis on the exemplary nature of Jesus' suffering. Again, that is not to say that he has no concept of the sacrificial character of Jesus' death. As with the ratification of a will, Jesus' death inaugurates the new covenant, which in turn provides the context for the service and offering that brings perfect atonement to those for whom Jesus mediates. But the author can also isolate the significance of Jesus' faithful endurance as a crucial element in the process. Jesus' faithful endurance in testing led to his resurrection. In this way Jesus becomes the ground for the author's parenesis. As the paradigmatic righteous sufferer, Jesus exemplifies how one should endure and how God ultimately rewards such faithfulness.

#### ***4.5 Conclusion***

The preceding argument suggests that the common strategy for interpreting Hebrews in terms of the two great moments of Yom Kippur is no longer tenable. The process of the Yom Kippur ritual cannot be abstracted from the slaughter of the victim whose blood is offered in the holy of holies. But the moment at which atonement is effected is not conflated with that slaughter. Rather, the manipulation of the blood/life of the animal, and in particular the presentation of that life before God in the holy of holies, is central to the atonement procured on that day. This further implies that the standard reading of Hebrews' Christology in terms of a humiliation-exaltation model needs to be modified. The author's argument has not, as is generally assumed, ignored or denied

Jesus' bodily resurrection. The evidence produced in the preceding chapters of this study has already suggested this conclusion. The present chapter has shown that, far from destroying the unity of the high-priestly Christology and soteriology developed by the author, the resurrection of Jesus' human body is a significant component in his explanation for *how* Jesus' offering effected atonement.

The writer's claim that Jesus can only serve as a high priest in heaven is consistent with his claims that Jesus presented his offering before God and that this presentation occurred in the heavenly tabernacle. Furthermore, the language he uses to identify Jesus' offering is, I have argued, more adequately explained if Jesus' bodily resurrection is confessed by the author. That is to say, the author speaks of Jesus' body, blood, and self to identify the atoning offering he presented to God. The usage of these terms fits the Levitical picture of blood sacrifice, the historical and literary contexts of Jewish blood sacrifice, and the larger argument of Hebrews better if Jesus' resurrection life is the notion that unifies them, rather than if—as is almost universally assumed—Jesus' death (and the notion that blood offering is centered on death) holds them together. Jesus' bodily resurrection makes coherent the author's references to his body, blood, and self as the offering Jesus brought into God's heavenly presence.

The language of Jesus' offering in heaven, then, should not be spiritualized or taken as a metaphor for the event of his death. In keeping with well-attested notions in Jewish apocalyptic literature in the Second Temple period, the author envisions a tabernacle in heaven. Jesus entered that tabernacle and went into the inner sanctum where God's throne is and where his presence dwells. There he presented himself, alive and in

his human body, before God. Jesus' living, human presence was pleasing to God and accepted by God for atonement. As such, Jesus' offering of his body/blood/self obtained redemption and purification for all those for whom Jesus serves as high priest. Thus, at the center of the logic of Jesus' atoning work in Hebrews is his bodily resurrection.

Granting this logic, Jesus' suffering can be seen to serve as a moral example without being reduced only to a spiritual or moral example. Jesus' faithful endurance makes him a model for his brothers and sisters *and* inaugurates the context within which atonement can be effected. The Son's experience of mortality enables him to be a *merciful* and *faithful* high priest who can sympathize with those he represents, while his resurrection from the dead enables him to be a *high priest*. It is, moreover, this glorified human life that he takes into heaven and presents in the heavenly holy of holies before God's throne. There, once the offering of his life was accepted, he was invited to take the throne and status promised by God to humanity. Jesus is the first human being to dwell fully in God's presence *qua* human being. Jesus' resurrection therefore informs the logic that unifies the high-priestly Christology, soteriology, and parenesis in the homily.

## 5. CONCLUSION

As discussed in the first chapter of this study, a strong consensus among modern scholars of Hebrews holds that the resurrection of Jesus' human body is ignored, defined in spiritual terms, or suppressed by the author. The writer's metaphorical application of the Yom Kippur sacrifice and the category of high priesthood to Jesus' death is generally thought to emphasize the slaughter and presentation of the sacrificial victim to such a degree that the author loses sight of (or even excises) the resurrection. Many suggest further that the author's cosmology, which likely assumed the kind of sharp spiritual vs. material dualism common to the various permutations of Middle Platonism, enabled him to correlate the basic structure of Yom Kippur with his soteriological vision.<sup>1</sup> The death-presentation structure of Yom Kippur allowed the author to cast Jesus' crucifixion in terms of the great, Jewish atoning sacrifice. From the vantage point of this metaphorical insight, the cross can be seen to be both the moment when the preexistent Son transitioned back into the heavenly realms and the means by which he was able to be exalted to God's right hand and the ultimate atoning sacrifice.

Many have argued, therefore, that in the author's view the incarnation of the Son was a temporary affair. The Son sojourned for a little while among his siblings, taking on for a brief time their blood and flesh and experiencing the suffering and death that comes

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<sup>1</sup> For some recent examples of this reading see Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NLT; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 17–21; Kenneth L. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (SNTSMS 143; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 117–20, 165–67. Schenck does not argue for a simple identification between Hebrews and Platonism, but the dualism he identifies in Hebrews coheres well with the kinds of cosmologies one finds in Middle Platonist texts.

along with that body. But, when he died, the days of his flesh came to an end and he was released from the material realm. Once free, his spirit ascended back into the heavenly realms. With yet another turn in the metaphor, the writer likens the flesh of the Son to the veil of the tabernacle (cf. 10:20), the barrier that kept even the priests away from the holy of holies. The human body, in other words, is for the author the barrier between God and humanity. It is taken as somehow fitting, even if hard to explain, that the author appeals to the Yom Kippur sacrifices and the category of high priesthood as an evocative metaphor to depict the spiritual and moral significance of Jesus' bloody death. By dying, the Son passed through the flesh/body barrier and entered God's presence like the high priest does on Yom Kippur.

But *why* and *how* does the Son's spirit passing through the earthly realm enable other spirits sojourning in that realm to transcend their fleshly bodies and enter heaven? This is one of the key questions that have bedeviled modern accounts of Hebrews' Christology and soteriology. Käsemann's appeal to the author's conscription of the Gnostic *Urmensch* myth in the service of the proclamation of the gospel represents perhaps the high water mark in explaining how such a representation of Jesus traditions might work. Some serious problems have subsequently been raised with respect to his thesis: 1) the existence of the myth that he relied on can no longer be assumed, and 2) the way in which he thought the offense of the early Christian proclamation of the

resurrection functioned in the respective contexts of Judaism and Hellenism can no longer be accepted.<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, some have tried to explain the author's soteriology and Christology without pitting the author's exposition against the early Christian proclamation of Jesus' resurrection. They argue that the resurrection is simply not necessary for the author because he appeals to the two-stage Yom Kippur typology. Others argue that the resurrection is conceived of in terms of Jesus' spiritual ascension from the cross. In spite of the now obvious faults of Käsemann's Gnostic account, his reading (and similarly the existentialist reading of Harold Attridge) has an internal consistency that cannot be too quickly dismissed. If the writer has merely ignored the bodily resurrection, then his theological account of Jesus' death probably is as incoherent as A. J. M. Wedderburn has suggested.

The question, therefore, remains: can the events of the Son's incarnation, suffering, and exaltation in Hebrews be seen to be intelligible as an account of the Messiah's serving as the high priest who obtains for his people atonement and entry into the eternal inheritance? If so, how? The argument of this study suggests that the answer lies in the very element of the early Christian proclamation almost universally ignored in modern interpretations of the text: *the author's affirmation of Jesus' bodily resurrection unifies and drives the high-priestly Christology and the soteriology of his homily.*

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<sup>2</sup> See my discussion of this point in section 1.2.3.2.

This study has sought to demonstrate this point in three moves. First, I argued in chapters two and three that the Son's exaltation above the angels depends on the assumption of his humanity in the heavenly realms. If the Son returned to the realm of the spirits as only a spirit, he would have left behind the very credential he needed to be elevated above the angelic spirits—his humanity. The logic of the argument for the Son's elevation above the angels in Heb 1–2 presumes Jesus' bodily resurrection and bodily ascension.

Second, as I argued in the latter part of chapter three, not only does the author make allusions and references to Jesus' resurrection in the sermon, but the confession of this event stands at the heart of his explanation for how Jesus, the Judahite, *became* the great high priest he now is (Heb 5–7). After he died, Jesus arose to the power of an indestructible life. Because he now possesses a life that remains, he is qualified to serve as *the* high priest of the heavenly order of priests.

Third, I argued in chapter four that the language the author uses to depict *what* Jesus offered *as* a sacrifice (viz., body, blood, and self) is in keeping with the logic of the Levitical sacrificial system and unified by the conception of the presentation of blood as the presentation of *life* before God. The logic of sacrifice in the biblical account is not a logic centered on slaughter, but a logic centered on the presentation of blood/life before God. If the author assumes Jesus' bodily resurrection, then the emphasis in Hebrews on the presentation Jesus made in the heavenly holy of holies is intelligible and coherent with this biblical account of blood offering. This is not to suggest that the author thought of Jesus' death as a mundane or insignificant event. Rather, the writer's high-priestly



Christology suggests that it was only because Jesus rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, appeared before God, and presented himself alive to God, that Jesus' death can be seen to be part of a sacrificial process. Specifically, Jesus' death was the necessary event that set into motion the sequence that resulted in the offering that effected the full atonement he obtained.

If the account of the role of the resurrection of Jesus' human body given in this study is correct, then the following concluding observations are in order.

1) The author's depiction of Jesus entering heaven and presenting his offering before God is not driven by his efforts to unpack the spiritual or existential significance of the earthly event of the crucifixion. Instead, the argument tracks out conceptually along the lines of a narrative substructure that happens to be remarkably similar to the later, credal narrative about Jesus—Jesus died, rose again, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.<sup>3</sup> This is not likely to be an historical accident. It seems more likely that the narrative substructure of Hebrews is what it is *because* this is the narrative substructure of early Christian proclamation as the author knows it. As such, the author's christological and soteriological project is not limited to an exploration of the significance of Jesus' death. Jesus' death is a crucial element in the homily; although when the author discusses this event, he focuses most of his attention on its exemplary

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<sup>3</sup> The recent books by Kenneth L. Schenck (*Cosmology and Eschatology*; cf. his, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003]) seek to unpack the narrative substructure of Hebrews (see my discussion in section 1.2.2.2.5). Schenck is, in my opinion, exactly right to highlight the narrative context within which the argument of Hebrews is located. I think, however, that Schenck's account misconstrues the dualism in Hebrews and thus misconstrues the significance of the event of Jesus' resurrection with the plot that drives the author's underlying narrative.

nature—Jesus died as the righteous sufferer *par excellence* who was fully vindicated by God. It is this vindication that orients his high-priestly Christology and the corresponding appeal to Yom Kippur as a model for his soteriology. Because Jesus was resurrected, he became the great high priest who entered heaven and presented himself as a sacrifice before God. Not only did the heavenly Son become human, he became the high priest who presently ministers and rules at God’s right hand.

2) The metanarrative within which the micronarrative just discussed is located probably determines the actual shape of the homily. The long debated question of why the author begins his discussion with an argument for the elevation of the Son over the angels should be answered in terms of the author’s conviction that, at the end of the ages, humanity will be elevated to the pinnacle of the created order. In particular, one human being, the Davidic Messiah, will be exalted not only above the Gentiles in Palestine, but above the entire created order—to the heavenly throne at God’s right hand. In the opinion of the author, Jesus is that “Son of Man.” As such, not only has he obtained what some Second Temple Jews referred to as “all the glory of Adam,” but so too will his followers if they endure the testing of the penultimate period of the “last days.” In these ways Jesus looks similar to the messianic speculation regarding the “Son of Man” that developed out of the figure of the “one like a human being” in Dan 7:13.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The links between Jesus in Hebrews and the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου figure in Dan 7:13 might run even deeper (see n. 199 in chapter two of this study where I note the possibility that in some Greek MSS associated with Theodotion’s version the entry of the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου into God’s heavenly presence and presentation before him could be interpreted in sacrificial terms).

Whether or not the audience is presently experiencing persecution, the recognition of this eschatological metanarrative suggests that the question of the community's falling back into something they had left is simply not the point at hand. The eschatological time clock is the issue. The author exhorts the audience to endure the testing of the penultimate period and, no matter what happens, not to turn away as Israel did at Kadesh Barnea. If they endure, they will receive their inheritance. Not only is this exemplified by Jesus, but because of who Jesus is and what he has done, their hope for that inheritance is even more secure.

3) The dualism of Hebrews is not a dualism of flesh-and-blood body vs. spirit. Rather, it is the kind of dualism that blood sacrifice, at least as depicted in the Pentateuch, appears designed to address—a dualism that assumes the incommensurability of the sinful and impure human being (both at the level of the spirit and of mortal flesh) and the holy, pure realm of God's glorious presence. The latter realm is ultimately the highest heaven; the former is the earth. Angels and priests perform some kind of mediating role because humanity is, apart from redemption and purification, unable to enter and dwell in God's presence. In the view of the author of Hebrews, the Mosaic covenant brought a limited redemption and purification, and so also a limited communication between God and his people. The Son, however, brings perfection. He has resolved the tension between God and humanity. By being incarnated, performing God's will, dying, rising again with his human body, ascending into heaven, and presenting himself alive to God as a sacrifice, the Son has obtained full redemption and purification for his siblings. His

subsequent elevation to the throne at God's right hand provides them with the guarantee that they too will attain to their promised inheritance.

Thus, at the very core of this homily lies the concern for how God and humanity can dwell together. In order for this to happen, the correlated issues of mortality, impurity, and sin have to be addressed. The resolution of these barriers between God and humanity is the goal of atonement in Hebrews. This resolution is what the presentation of Jesus' humanity before God accomplishes. Jonathan Klawans has recently joined the growing number of scholars who argue that in the priestly traditions the function of sacrifice is largely concerned with ensuring that the Divine presence can continue to dwell among Israel in the sanctuary. He notes, "[T]he priestly traditions' favorite term for the sacrificial act—"offering" (קָרָבָן), with its connotation of closeness and nearness—is likely expressive of the same concern."<sup>5</sup> This concern is, I suggest, the concern that drives the logic of Jesus' offering in Hebrews, though with a twist. The author's eschatology leads him to shift the focus of the function of sacrifice off of the maintenance of God's presence in the earthly sanctuary and on to the entry of the human being into the promised land where God and his people will dwell together fully and forever.

4) Points 2 and 3 above have a significant hermeneutical implication. Specifically, the metanarrative and the kind of dualism just discussed have analogies in Jewish apocalypticism. Jewish apocalyptic literature attests different accounts of human ascension into heaven, resurrection, and the nature of the coming age/world.

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 69.

Nevertheless, the argument of this study indicates that those accounts that envision a transformation of humanity and the corruptible world provide helpful analogies for the kind of glorified human being that the author of Hebrews assumes Jesus has become. In particular, those apocalyptic accounts that envision the transformation of the human being and the created realm such that human ontology and the material of creation are not destroyed but made to share in the glory of God are pertinent. Like Hebrews, some of these accounts also look to the elevation of the human being to a status above that of the angelic spirits precisely because the human being, a being whose ontology includes a flesh-and-blood body, is something the angelic spirits are not—the image of God.

It may be difficult for us as modern readers to grasp how mortal bodies could be transformed into incorruptible, glorious bodies with a kind of blood and flesh that could enter heaven, just as it was for educated Hellenists like Plutarch. But this does not mean that such conceptions were not viable and intelligible in the ancient world (cf. Luke 24:39–40, 51; Acts 1:9–11). Plutarch’s mockery of people who imagine that Romulus ascended to the gods with his body already indicates that even in the larger Hellenistic milieu of the Roman Empire, some people could think along similar lines.<sup>6</sup> How much more those Jews whose eschatological commitments oriented them towards a final age in which God’s people and the rest of creation are to be transformed into the presently invisible reality of God’s unshakable glory? My contention is that the author of Hebrews conceived of Jesus’ resurrection in terms of such a glorification.

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<sup>6</sup> Plutarch, *Rom.*, 27.6–28.8.

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## Biography

David M. Moffitt was born in Rochester, New York on January 27, 1974. David received his B.A. from Grove City College in May of 1996. He earned an M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in May of 2001. In September of 2003 he received a Th.M. from Duke Divinity School. During his graduate program David published three articles: “‘If Another Priest Arises’: Jesus’ Resurrection and the High Priestly Christology of Hebrews,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (ed. Richard Bauckham, et al; LNTS 387; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 68–79; “Affirming the ‘Creed’: The Extent of Paul’s Citation of an Early Christian Formula in 1 Cor 15,3b–7,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche* 99 (2008): 49–73; and “Righteous Bloodshed, Matthew’s Passion Narrative and the Temple’s Destruction: Lamentations as a Matthean Intertext,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125 (2006): 299–320.

In 2010 David was nationally recognized by the Society of Biblical Literature to receive one of two Regional Scholar awards. He received the 2009 National Association of Baptist Professors in Religion Dissertation Scholarship. In 2008 he was selected for a Judy C. Woodruff Fellowship. He was a Fulbright Scholar from 2006 to 2007 (Eberhard-Karls Universität Tübingen, Germany). Additionally, he received a Duke University Graduate School Fellowship (2003–2008), numerous Duke University Graduate School Travel Grants for presenting scholarly papers, and was elected to Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges in 2001. He is a member of the Society of Biblical Literature, the Institute for Biblical Research, the National Association of

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